

21 November 2014

# Army Public Health Weekly Update

U.S. Army Public Health Command



The Army Public Health Update is a collection of articles taken verbatim from public sources to offer awareness of current health issues and the media coverage given to them. The articles do not necessarily represent US Army Medical Department opinions, views, policy, or guidance, and should not be construed or interpreted as being endorsed by the US Army Medical Department.

U.S. Military | Global | Influenza | Veterinary/Food Safety | Wellness | Contact Us

USAFRICOM | USCENTCOM | USEUCOM | USNORTHCOM | USPACOM | USSOUTHCOM

## NOTICE

Because of the Thanksgiving holiday, there will be no Army Public Health Weekly Update next week. Publication will resume on 5 December 2014.

## Healthy Thanksgiving Tips

Enjoy these **Performance Triad tips** on how to eat well, stay physically active, and get plenty of sleep during the holiday.



*Approved for public release, distribution unlimited.*

## Contents

### U.S. MILITARY

---

- Dengue fever researchers in military weigh infecting volunteers
- Neck injections a viable treatment for PTSD, researchers say
- Oxygen therapy no better than placebo for treating concussion, study finds
- Sleep disorder affects combat soldiers
- Update: Cold weather injuries, active and reserve components, U.S. Armed Forces, July 2009–June 2014
- Veterans claim contractor in charge of burn pits is responsible for lung illnesses

### GLOBAL

---

- Assessment of empirical antibiotic therapy optimisation in six hospitals: an observational cohort study
- Bed bugs can transmit the Chagas disease parasite
- Climate change will be hazardous to your health
- New yellow fever research may lead to improved treatment
- Obesity is tied to pollutants
- Progress toward global eradication of dracunculiasis — January 2013–June 2014
- Real-time genome sequencing helps control hospital outbreak
- Snakes leave identity within their fang marks
- Viruses as a cure
- EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE
- Communicating uncertainty — ebola, public health, and the scientific process
- Dangerous deliveries: Ebola leaves moms and babies without care
- Fighting Ebola in Liberia with technology
- Hagel calls up 2,100 from reserve, National Guard for Ebola fight
- Update: Ebola virus disease epidemic — West Africa, November 2014
- WHO plans to speed development of Ebola rapid test
- WHO reports intense Ebola activity in large part of Sierra Leone

### INFLUENZA

---

- Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center: DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary
- Avian flu detected in the Netherlands and Britain
- 'Back boost' could help future-proof flu vaccines
- CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

## Subscription or Comments

If you wish to be added to the APH Weekly Update mailing list, removed from the mailing list, or if you have comments or questions about the update, please [contact us](#). We welcome your comments. Please feel free to share this update with others who may be interested.



## Follow us!



Facebook



Twitter



YouTube

- DoD Global, Laboratory-Based, Influenza Surveillance Program
- Flu News Europe
- Human infection with avian influenza A(H7N9) virus – China
- Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update
- USAPHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report
- WHO Influenza Update

## VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

---

- Japan strengthens food security in Afghanistan
- Minnesota *E coli* outbreak tied to California celery

## WELLNESS

---

- Alcohol taxes may give boost to public health, economy
- 'Being poor is not the same everywhere'
- Drowning: 'Hidden childhood killer'
- Firestorm erupts in anti-smoking Massachusetts town
- How one Australian symphony orchestra protects players' ears
- Most heavy drinkers are not alcoholics, U.S. study finds
- New tool may predict your risk of heart disease
- Obesity 'costing same as smoking'
- Sleep's link to learning and memory traced to brain chemistry

## USAFRICOM

---

- Democratic Republic of the Congo: DR Congo declares itself Ebola-free
- South Sudan and Madagascar: Poliovirus
- Zimbabwe: Stealing lives

## USCENTCOM

---

- Afghanistan: Report - Sub-standard medicine floods Afghan market
- Egypt: Second woman dies of bird flu in Egypt
- In shift, Pakistanis fleeing war flow into beleaguered Afghanistan

## USEUCOM

---

- Russia: Why Putin might blame the U.S. for Russia's drugs problem
- United Kingdom: Evaluation of the surveillance system for undiagnosed serious infectious illness (USII) in intensive care units, 2011 to 2013
- United Kingdom: Public Health England to scan thousands of homes in Gloucestershire for radioactive gas radon

## USNORTHCOM

---

- Mexico detects first case of mosquito-borne chikungunya virus
- U.S.: Colorado hospital giant Centura Health to stop hiring tobacco users
- U.S.: Fewer infants dying than before, CDC reports
- U.S.: Photos of insects reveal extraordinary beauty
- U.S.: Public Health strongly recommends travelers to Hawaii get measles vaccine
- U.S.: Report - Child homelessness surges in the US
- U.S. seniors' health poorest, global survey shows
- U.S.: Snow piles up in western New York, with more expected; at least 7 die

## USPACOM

---

- China: Nurses stabbed to death at China hospital
- Japan: Study - Fukushima health risks underestimated

**New  
Ebola Resources  
from USAPHC**

Technical Information  
Paper: [Terminal Cleaning  
for Ebola Virus Disease  
\(EVD\) Contaminated  
Patient Care Areas](#)

Technical Information  
Paper: [Preparing and  
Measuring High Chlorine  
Concentration Solutions  
for Disinfection](#)



- [Malaysia: Born and jailed in Malaysia - A refugee's fear](#)

**USSOUTHCOM**

---

- [Brazil: Fears of a new Chikungunya viral strain in Brazil with the coming of summer](#)

**U.S. MILITARY**

---

## Dengue fever researchers in military weigh infecting volunteers

13 November - Scientists at Walter Reed Army Institute of Research are considering resurrecting a research program that would infect healthy people with dengue fever, the potentially deadly mosquito-borne disease that has no specific drug treatment. The tests raise ethical issues, but advocates say they are offset by the need to halt the dramatic growth in the disease. ... The purpose of such a study, known as the "human infection" or "human challenge" model, is to see which viral strains cause mild dengue illness in people. The strains that make people sick are used to test potential vaccines and drugs, possibly leading to prevention and treatment of the disease. [Wall Street Journal](#)

## Neck injections a viable treatment for PTSD, researchers say

19 November - A nearly century-old anesthesia technique is showing promise as treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder, relieving symptoms in 70 percent of combat veterans who received it once or more, according to a new review. The therapy, stellate ganglion block, or SGB, quelled symptoms of PTSD, such as sleep disturbances, anxiety and depression, as measured by a checklist in nearly 100 service members suffering from combat-related stress within a week of treatment, according to the report published in October. SGB involves injecting an anesthetic into a bundle of nerves — the stellate ganglion — that sits near the base of the neck. In some cases, the shot, given under general anesthesia and guided to the exact spot by a physician using an ultrasound, gave instantaneous relief to patients with chronic PTSD symptoms, according to the review of cases published in the journal *Military Medicine*. [Military Times](#)

## Oxygen therapy no better than placebo for treating concussion, study finds

17 November - ... Hyperbaric oxygen, or HBO, therapy has been praised by some in the medical community as well as head injury patients as a drug-free treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury and post-concussive symptoms. But several military studies, including the latest published Monday in *JAMA Internal Medicine*, say otherwise. In research involving 72 service members with chronic post-concussive symptoms, physicians found that patients who received a series of 40 oxygen therapy

**CDC Webinar  
Caring for Patients  
with Ebola in U.S.  
Hospitals: A Nursing  
Perspective**

Health care organizations across the country are preparing to respond to the possibility of Ebola cases in their communities.

Several U.S. hospitals have treated patients with the disease and can provide important information to other health care workers related to personal protective equipment, staffing models, and critical care nursing.

During this COCA Call, clinicians will learn about the clinical management experiences of nurses who cared for patients with Ebola at Emory Healthcare and Nebraska Medical Center.

Date: Monday, November 24, 2014

Time: 2:00 - 3:00 pm (ET)

Join by Phone:

888-972-6898  
(U.S. Callers)

630-395-0194  
(International Callers)

Passcode: 5076538

Join by [Live Audio Web Streaming](#): *Listen only.*

treatments in a pressurized hyperbaric chamber did see significant improvements in their symptoms — but so did those who were treated with slightly pressurized regular air in a chamber. The only patients who didn't see any improvements were those who had no treatments. [Military Times](#)

## Sleep disorder affects combat soldiers

13 November - The study of a series of patients at Madigan Army Medical Center has led doctors to discover a unique sleep-related condition affecting combat soldiers called trauma-associated sleep disorder. "Redeployed military personnel have reported for the last 13 years complex nighttime behaviors ranging from sleepwalking, tossing and turning, thrashing, screaming, and even hitting their bed partners," said Col. (Dr.) Vincent Mysliwiec, principal investigator and lead author, and U.S. Army Medicine sleep medicine specialist. "While these disruptive nocturnal behaviors are frequently reported, they are rarely documented in laboratory settings." Although previous authors recognized some of the unique sleep disturbances seen in combat survivors, the constellation of findings of disruptive nocturnal behaviors, nightmares and rapid eye movement, or REM, sleep without atonia had never been linked together. There was no current diagnosis that encompassed all these trauma engendered sleep disturbances. [Fort Leavenworth Lamp](#)

## Update: Cold weather injuries, active and reserve components, U.S. Armed Forces, July 2009–June 2014

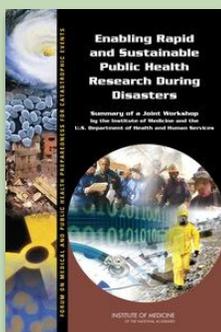
October 2014 - From July 2013 through June 2014, the number of active and reserve component service members treated for cold injuries (n=719) was the highest of the past five cold seasons (2009–2014). The rate of cold injury among active component personnel was also the highest of the 5-year period. Army personnel accounted for the majority (62%) of cold injuries. Frostbite was the most common type of cold injury in each of the services. Consistent with trends from previous cold seasons, service members who were female, younger than 20 years old, or of black, non-Hispanic race/ethnicity tended to have higher cold injury rates than their respective counterparts. Numbers of cases in the combat zone have decreased in the past 2 years, presumably as a result of declining numbers of personnel exposed and the changing nature of operations. The increase in numbers and the geographic distribution of cold injuries in the previous cold season are compatible with the unusual pattern of cold weather that marked Winter 2013–2014. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

## Veterans claim contractor in charge of burn pits is responsible for lung illnesses

17 November - ... Brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder are two well-known signature wounds of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. But there is another injury, lung disease, that afflicts tens of thousands of veterans. Many blame a single defense contractor and have filed a class action lawsuit, a case that has now made its way to the Supreme Court. ... These men are part of a class action lawsuit which has 250 named plaintiffs. But

## Enabling Rapid and Sustainable Public Health Research during Disasters

Important information that needs to be collected during and immediately following public health emergencies is often missed because of barriers and obstacles to gathering such data, such as varying institutional review board restrictions in different states, no sustainable funding network for this type of work, uncertainty on who should be involved in research response, and a lack of knowledge around how best to integrate research into response and recovery frameworks.



they represent a group of potentially up to 100,000 veterans and civilian contractors who could join suit. They're suing Kellogg Brown & Root, or KBR, the company that used to be a subsidiary of Halliburton and was contracted to provide logistical support to the military in Iraq and Afghanistan. It was KBR's job to truck in supplies, feed troops, and get rid of the garbage. SUSAN BURKE, Lead Attorney: We have outlawed burning of waste in this country for decades. You cannot go in your backyard and burn all your trash in a bucket. And the reason why is that it's known to be harmful to human health. ... One of the things that they promised to do was to take care of the waste, to dispose of the waste in a manner that wasn't harmful to the troops. They didn't do that. So, the complaint alleges that that open air burning, which violated the terms of the contract, caused these injuries. ... ROBERT MATTHEWS, Attorney, KBR: That's completely false. We exactly lived up to our contractual promise. ... The decisions to use burn pits were made by senior military rank across these war theaters. [PBS Newshour](#)

[top of page...](#)

## GLOBAL

---

### Assessment of empirical antibiotic therapy optimisation in six hospitals: an observational cohort study

December 2014 - Modification of empirical antimicrobials when warranted by culture results or clinical signs is recommended to control antimicrobial overuse and resistance. We aimed to assess the frequency with which patients were started on empirical antimicrobials, characteristics of the empirical regimen and the clinical characteristics of patients at the time of starting antimicrobials, patterns of changes to empirical therapy at different timepoints, and modifiable factors associated with changes to the initial empirical regimen in the first 5 days of therapy. ... Broad-spectrum empirical therapy is common, even when clinical signs of infection are absent. Fewer than one in three inpatients have their regimens narrowed within 5 days of starting empirical antimicrobials. Improved diagnostic methods and continued education are needed to guide discontinuation of antimicrobials. [The Lancet](#) (abstract only)

### Bed bugs can transmit the Chagas disease parasite

18 November - ... Bed bugs—normally just disgust-inducing pests—can become a bedroom-dwelling army of disease carriers when they acquire and transmit *Trypanosoma cruzi*, the parasite that causes Chagas disease. Those were the findings of a new paper published in *American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*. [Chagas disease](#) is a top killer in Central and South America, and until now, its parasite was only known to be carried by kissing bugs. These bugs creep into a person's bed at night, often biting them around the mouth (hence their name) ... Given the recent uptick of bed bug infestations, researchers from the University of Pennsylvania and the Universidad Peruana Cayetano

## Classified Version of the Weekly Update

An Army Public Health Weekly Update is available with articles classified up to the **SECRET** level from the USAPHC SIPRNet site:

<http://phc.army.smil.mil>

Look under Hot Topics & Current Issues.

To access this version, you will need a **SECRET** clearance and a SIPRNet account.

## Links

[A-Z Index](#)

[About USAPHC](#)

[Army Public Health and Health Information Weekly Update Archives](#)

[Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

[Medical Threat Briefings \(AKO\)](#)

[Request USAPHC Services](#)

[USAPHC Resource Materials](#)

[USAPHC Homepage](#)

[USAPHC Training](#)

[Contact USAPHC](#)

Heredia in Peru wondered if bed bugs might be similar enough to their deadly cousins to also transmit the disease. ... In laboratory experiments, the researchers allowed 3,000 bedbugs to feast on *T. cruzi*-infected mice. After a month, the majority of the bed bugs turned up positive for *T. cruzi*—which was not shy about taking up residence in a new species' gut. [Smithsonian](#)

## Climate change will be hazardous to your health

19 November - ... Climate change, [Howard Frumkin, Dean and Professor of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences at the University of Washington] believes, is “the biggest health challenge in the coming century.” In addition to anticipated death tolls from more frequent and more intense severe weather events, many chronic issues are coming to the fore. Air pollutants – most notably lung-busting ozone and particulates – increase with heightened temperatures. Ozone forms from nitrogen oxides and hydrocarbons through atmospheric chemical reactions that speed up with heat, while particulates nucleate around liquid droplets and can penetrate deeply into the lungs. Both pollutants can cause problematic respiratory responses, and as Frumkin notes, “in the aggregate, the air quality in some areas rivals what you’d see being downwind from a big wildfire.” [Wired](#)

## New yellow fever research may lead to improved treatment

20 November - Researchers in California have identified features of [yellow fever](#) that may lead to more effective treatment of the disease. According to the World Health Organization, there are some 200,000 new cases of yellow fever each year, and about 30,000 victims die. The vast majority of cases are in sub-Saharan Africa, but the disease is also found throughout Latin America. To learn more about the disease, Ilhem Messaoudi, associate professor of biological sciences at the University of California, Riverside, and colleagues studied yellow fever in rhesus monkeys. In the first such study in two decades, the scientists looked at how yellow fever affected the immune system and also what was going on at the genetic level by analyzing DNA. [VOA](#)

## Obesity is tied to pollutants

17 November - Exposure to secondhand smoke and roadway traffic may be tied to increased body mass index in children and adolescents, a new study suggests. Researchers studied 3,318 children in 12 Southern California communities beginning at an average age of 10, and then followed them through age 18. They used parental questionnaires to establish exposure to smoking, and data on traffic volume and levels of nitrogen dioxide, ozone and particulates to track pollution. The study ... controlled for many other factors: sex, initial B.M.I., asthma, physical activity, insurance status, parental education and income, acres of parks and open space nearby, percentage of people living in poverty in each community. But even after accounting for these issues and more, they found that compared with children exposed to no secondhand smoke or near-roadway air pollution, B.M.I. was 0.80 higher in children exposed to pollution alone, 0.85 higher in those exposed to secondhand smoke alone, and 2.15 higher in those exposed to both. [New York Times](#)

## Progress toward global eradication of dracunculiasis — January 2013–June 2014

21 November - ... This report updates published and unpublished surveillance data reported by ministries of health and describes progress toward dracunculiasis eradication. A total of 148 cases were reported in 2013 from five countries (in order of prevalence: South Sudan, Chad, Mali, Ethiopia, and Sudan) compared with 542 cases in 2012 from four countries (South Sudan, Chad, Mali, and Ethiopia). The disease remains endemic in four countries in 2014 (South Sudan, Chad, Mali, and Ethiopia), but the overall incidence is falling faster in 2013 compared with 2012 (by 73%) and continues to fall faster in the first 6 months of 2014 (by 71%) compared with the same period in 2013. Failures in surveillance and containment, lack of clean drinking water, insecurity in Mali and parts of South Sudan, and an unusual epidemiologic pattern in Chad are the main remaining challenges to dracunculiasis eradication. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

## Real-time genome sequencing helps control hospital outbreak

19 November - ... [Researchers] ... report how whole genome sequencing was used to control an outbreak of *A. baumannii* at Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham in 2011. The outbreak began following the admittance of a military patient from Afghanistan with blast injuries and lasted for 80 weeks - making it one of the longest outbreaks ever described for this pathogen. The patient was carrying a novel strain of the bacterium that had not previously been observed in the region's hospitals. After first using traditional methods to try and contain the pathogen, the researchers decided to switch to whole genome sequencing mid-way through the outbreak. Sampling patients and the environment, the researchers were able to identify 74 patients belonging to the outbreak. They then determined the detailed genetic makeup of the bacteria carried by each of these patients and used this data, with information about the ward that the patients were housed in, and the date of their first positive tests, to identify nearly 70 possible transmission events. Armed with this detailed information, the researchers were able to pinpoint transmission hot spots within the hospital, which included an operating theatre and a specialised bed for burns patients. [Medical Xpress](#)

## Snakes leave identity within their fang marks

17 November - Getting a DNA swab from the fang marks of a snake bite can accurately identify the type of snake, a team working in Nepal has found. The information is important because venom from different species has widely differing chemistry and causes different complications ... Data from a study of 194 snake bites in Nepal was presented this month at the annual meeting of the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene in New Orleans; it was done by researchers from Nepal, Switzerland and Germany. DNA could be swabbed from about a quarter of the bites and amplified, the researchers found. Folk remedies made it harder to get a viable sample, they said. When the snake was available,

there was a 100 percent match. Standard DNA testing is too difficult for poor, rural clinics. But proving that it works could lead to rapid diagnostic tests, the authors said. [New York Times](#)

## Viruses as a cure

19 November - ... [Our] bodies are home to trillions of viruses, and new research hints that some of them may actually be keeping us healthy. "Viruses have gotten a bad rap," said Ken Cadwell, an immunologist at New York University School of Medicine. "They don't always cause disease." Dr. Cadwell stumbled by accident onto the first clues about the healing power of viruses. At the time, he was studying the microbiome, the community of 100 trillion microbes living in our bodies. Scientists have long known that the microbiome is important to our health. ... Murine norovirus is related to the nasty human strain that causes vomiting and diarrhea — and has ruined so many cruises. The virus is harmless in healthy mice, but Dr. Cadwell found that when he gave it to his mutant mice, it triggered inflammatory bowel disease. Dr. Cadwell was struck by how much the virus mimicked the microbiome. [New York Times](#)

## EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE

### Communicating uncertainty — ebola, public health, and the scientific process

13 November - ... The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has been widely criticized for projecting overconfidence in U.S. hospitals' capacity to manage Ebola. ... [Here] the real risk is fear. Beyond its inherent unpleasantness, fear is a risk in itself because it demands a response. ... The challenge, when officials facing uncertainty seek to prevent panic, is that the perception of inadequate understanding by experts is one of several factors known to heighten fear. Ebola's characteristics encompass essentially all such factors: most of us incur the risk it poses involuntarily, it is novel and highly fatal, it has potential for unlimited growth, and it ravages people in dreadful ways. Because we can't change these fear factors, the one factor seemingly within our control, projecting understanding of the disease, feels imperative. Unfortunately, any new health threat comes with uncertainties, in our understanding of both the disease and the transmission risks. ... Containing the epidemic requires ... a willingness to trust that though our health authorities cannot know everything, they will do everything they can to protect us with the knowledge they have. [New England Journal of Medicine](#)

### Dangerous deliveries: Ebola leaves moms and babies without care

18 November - ... The problem, [ELWA's assistant director, Dr. John Fankhauser] says, is that women who are miscarrying often have bleeding and cramping, like someone with Ebola.

So it's very difficult to tell the difference. The risk to health care workers is so high that many clinics in Liberia refuse to treat pregnant women. Hospitals have closed their maternity wards. The ripple of effects of that breakdown in the health care system could be more catastrophic than Ebola itself. ELWA is one of the few health facilities in Monrovia where a woman can deliver her baby. The midwives there now wear full Ebola suits — gown, gloves, face mask, goggles — during every delivery. And they get sprayed down with chlorine after a shift, just like in the Ebola clinic. "So far, by the grace of God, we haven't had another infection," Fankhauser says. "But all we can do is take great precautions. We can't stop caring for patients." ... And many midwives across Liberia have stopped caring for patients, says Ester Kolleh, the lead midwife at ELWA. They've quit or stopped coming to work. "Everybody is afraid of catching Ebola," she says, "because most nurses who caught Ebola died." [NPR](#)

## Fighting Ebola in Liberia with technology

16 November - Liberia's technology hub was abuzz this past summer. A team of Liberian techies set lofty plans in motion for the next two years - promoting entrepreneurship, freedom of information, and women in technology. But by the end of August, however, the Ebola outbreak had brought these plans to a grinding halt. ... Among other things, iLab is using a mapping tool ... to map Ebola and other crises around the world. ... This is all part of a growing effort to use technology - particularly mobile phone technology - to bolster response to the outbreak. Two million text messages are sent out every month with information about Ebola by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). Officials in Nigeria used phone records to trace who Ebola patients had come into contact with, eventually helping make Nigeria Ebola-free. [Al Jazeera](#)

## Hagel calls up 2,100 from reserve, National Guard for Ebola fight

14 November - Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel has authorized the mobilization of about 2,100 troops from the Army Reserve and National Guard to deploy to Africa to aid in relief efforts to stem the Ebola outbreak. Army officials were in the process of notifying soldiers and their families Friday, according to Rear Adm. John Kirby, a Pentagon spokesman. Hagel signed the authorization Thursday night. The troops, who will replace forces in Liberia and Senegal as part of Operation United Assistance, will receive training in Ebola prevention and medical readiness before deploying. [Stars and Stripes](#)

## Update: Ebola virus disease epidemic — West Africa, November 2014

18 November - ... According to the latest World Health Organization update on November 14, 2014, a total of 14,383 Ebola cases have been reported as of November 11 from three West African countries (Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone) where transmission is widespread and intense. The highest reported case counts were from Liberia (6,878 cases) and Sierra Leone (5,586), followed by Guinea (1,919). Peaks in the number of new cases occurred in

Liberia (509 cases), Sierra Leone (540 cases), and Guinea (292 cases) at epidemiologic weeks 38 (September 14–20), 44 (October 26–November 1), and 41 (October 5–11), respectively. A total of 5,438 deaths have been reported. Investigation of localized transmission in two locations in Mali (Kourémalé and Bamako) is currently underway. Transmission was interrupted successfully in Nigeria (October 19) and prevented in Senegal (October 17). The 2,705 new Ebola cases reported during October 19–November 8 were more widely distributed geographically among districts in Guinea and Liberia compared with the 2,809 new cases reported during September 28–October 18. During both periods, counts of Ebola cases reported were highest in the area around Monrovia, Liberia; the Western and northwest districts of Sierra Leone, particularly Bombali and Port Loko; and the prefectures of Kérouané, Macenta, and Nzérékoré, Guinea. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

## WHO plans to speed development of Ebola rapid test

18 November - Quicker and simpler diagnostic tests for Ebola could go a long way in helping break chains of disease transmission in West Africa's outbreak region, the World Health Organization (WHO) said today, as it unveiled two new initiatives to expedite their development. The WHO said it hopes new efforts—similar to those under way to test and deliver an Ebola vaccine—can compress the development of a rapid test in months instead of years. [CIDRAP](#)

## WHO reports intense Ebola activity in large part of Sierra Leone

19 November - In Guinea and Liberia, the incidence of reported Ebola cases is no longer increasing, but intense transmission is occurring in several districts, the World Health Organization (WHO) said today. In Sierra Leone, however, disease incidence is still rising, driven by intense activity in a wide swath of the country's north and west that includes Freetown. As of Nov 16, the global number of Ebola cases linked to the outbreak is 15,145 infections, along with 5,420 deaths. The totals reflect an increase of 732 cases and 243 deaths since the WHO's last update on Nov 14. [CIDRAP](#)

[top of page...](#)

### **INFLUENZA**

---

## Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center: DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary

For Week 45:

- In NORTHCOM influenza activity remained low and at baseline
- In EUCOM while influenza activity spiked above baseline it still remains low

- In PACOM influenza activity is minimal and remains below baseline
- In PACOM influenza activity is minimal and remains below baseline
- In CENTCOM and AFRICOM influenza activity is slightly above baseline
- In SOUTHCOM among local nationals influenza activity is very low. [AFHSC DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary](#)

## Avian flu detected in the Netherlands and Britain

17 November - Health officials moved to combat outbreaks of bird flu at poultry farms in Britain and the Netherlands on Monday, culling thousands of chickens and ducks to avert the spread of infection. On Sunday, the Dutch authorities blocked the transportation of eggs and poultry across the country after a strain of the flu was detected at a farm in Hekendorp, south of Amsterdam. The strain was said to be lethal for poultry and potentially transmissible to humans. The authorities ordered the slaughter of 150,000 chickens at the farm. News reports identified the strain as H5N8, which has never been detected in humans, according to the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control in Stockholm. The strain has been reported in birds in South Korea, China, Japan and, earlier this month, in Germany. [New York Times](#)

## 'Back boost' could help future-proof flu vaccines

20 November - An international team of scientists has found it may be possible to make seasonal flu vaccines more effective by using an idea known as "back boost" and pre-empting flu virus evolution. In a study published on Thursday in the journal Science, the University of Cambridge-led team said their finding should enable people to be immunized against future likely flu strains as well as ones currently circulating... [Scientists] found that when flu re-infects, the immune system responds not just to the infecting strain, but also to all the strains it has encountered in the past -- a phenomenon the researchers termed "back-boost". This suggests it makes more sense to pre-emptively vaccinate against likely future flu strains than to use a strain already circulating in the human population, the scientists said. [Reuters](#)

## CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 45 (November 2 - 8, 2014), influenza activity was low in the United States.

- Viral Surveillance: Of 9,138 specimens tested and reported during week 45, 678 (7.4%) were positive for influenza.
- Pneumonia and Influenza Mortality: The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza (P&I) was below the epidemic threshold.
- Influenza-associated Pediatric Deaths: No influenza-associated pediatric deaths were reported.
- Outpatient Illness Surveillance: The proportion of outpatient visits for influenza-like illness (ILI) was 1.6%, which is below the national baseline of 2.0%. [FluView](#)

## DoD Global, Laboratory-Based, Influenza Surveillance Program

- During Surveillance Weeks 44 & 45 (26 October to 8 November 2014), a total of 159 specimens were collected and received from 45 locations. Results were finalized for 96 specimens from 39 locations. During Week 44, seven influenza A(H3N2) were identified. During Week 45, five influenza A(H3N2) and one influenza B were identified.
- As of 10 November 2014, USAFSAM received 83 specimens from 15 bases requesting EV-D68 testing. Fifty-two specimens tested positive for Rhinovirus/Enterovirus on multiplex PCR. Results are available from 30 specimens submitted to the CDC for EV-D68 testing; two are pending shipment. Of these 30 specimens, 12 tested positive for EV-D68, five tested positive for rhinovirus, and 13 tested negative for EV-D68. USAFSAM will forward all specimens to the CDC that come in with an EV-D68 concern and test positive for Rhinovirus/Enterovirus on multiplex PCR. [USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

## Flu News Europe

Week 45/2014

- All 39 countries submitting data reported low intensity influenza activity.
- Seven countries reported sporadic cases and two countries increasing trends.
- Of the 477 sentinel influenza-like illness (ILI) and acute respiratory infection (ARI) specimens tested across 28 countries, seven (1%) from five countries tested positive for influenza.
- No hospitalised laboratory-confirmed influenza cases were reported.

Season

- As is typical for this time of the year, influenza activity in the Europe and Central Asia is low, and there is no indication that the influenza season has started.
- No indications of increased mortality have been reported through the European monitoring of excess mortality for public health action project. [Flu News Europe](#)

## Human infection with avian influenza A(H7N9) virus – China

18 November - On 15 November 2014, the National Health and Family Planning Commission (NHFPC) of China notified WHO of 3 additional laboratory-confirmed cases of human infection with avian influenza A(H7N9) virus, including 1 death. ... WHO continues to closely monitor the H7N9 situation and conduct risk assessment. So far, the overall risk associated with the H7N9 virus has not changed. [WHO](#)

## Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For Week 46 (through 15 November 2014):

- Influenza: No new cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza among US military basic trainees.
- FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were at or below expected values. [NHRC Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update](#)

## USAPHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report

For the week ending 1 November 2014 (Week 44):

Influenza-like illness (ILI) activity remains low in both Army and civilian populations. There was an increase in lab specimens that tested positive for influenza A (4.9% as compared to 3.5% in week 43); WRMC reported the most influenza A positive laboratory specimens (15).

- ILI Activity: Army incident ILI outpatient visits in week 44 were 20% lower than for the same week last year.
- Influenza cases: No influenza cases were reported to USAPHC through DRSi in week 44.
- Viral specimens: During week 44, 84 of 585 (14%) laboratory specimens tested positive for respiratory pathogens; 22 of 451 (4.9%) specimens tested for influenza A were positive. WRMC reported the most influenza A cases (68%), followed by SRMC (23%), NRMC (4.5%), and PRMC (4.5%). RSV accounted for 39% of positive specimens. [USAPHC U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report](#)

## WHO Influenza Update

17 November - Globally, influenza activity remained low, with the exception of some Pacific Islands.

- In North America, influenza activity continued to increase slightly but remained low.
- In Europe overall influenza activity remained at inter-seasonal levels.
- In tropical countries of the Americas, influenza detections remained low, with respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) causing most influenza-like illness (ILI) and severe acute respiratory infections (SARI) activity.
- In Africa and western and eastern Asia, influenza activity was low.
- In tropical Asia, influenza activity was low with influenza B predominant in Viet Nam.
- In the southern hemisphere, influenza activity remained low except in several Pacific Islands where ILI activity remained high. [WHO](#)

[top of page...](#)

## VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

---

### Japan strengthens food security in Afghanistan

20 November - The Government of Japan, through technical assistance of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and in collaboration with the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, has announced a new project to boost the resilience and livelihoods of livestock farmers in Afghanistan. Animal disease outbreaks and emergencies threaten the livelihoods of livestock farmers and negatively impact a country's economy and, in particular, the food security of nomad communities in Afghanistan that rely heavily on livestock. Because early detection and warning systems are vital, the project will establish a network of local focal points, community-based animal health and extension workers, who will be trained in early disease detection in sheep, goats and cattle – the mainstay of Afghanistan's livestock production – and help to set up a system of rapid response to outbreaks. [Scoop](#)

### Minnesota *E coli* outbreak tied to California celery

17 November - An outbreak of *Escherichia coli* O157:H7 in northern Minnesota has been tied to celery grown in California, according to a Nov 13 report in *The Californian*. The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) confirmed that 57 members of the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa were sickened by celery served at 5 tribal events from Jul 1-17. Nine people were hospitalized, although no one developed hemolytic uremic syndrome, a dangerous kidney condition associated with *E coli* infections, the article said. The tainted celery came from Martignoni Ranch in Gonzales, California. The ranch is located next to a defunct dairy operation. The California Department of Public Health did not find *E coli* on the ranch or farm, suggesting that the celery could have been contaminated during production, the story said. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

[top of page...](#)

## WELLNESS

---

### Alcohol taxes may give boost to public health, economy

18 November - Some may believe that raising taxes on alcohol products will cost jobs in the service sector, but a new study suggests that's made up for by job creation elsewhere. ... "Money not spent on alcohol, coupled with the newly raised tax revenues, will be spent on other goods and services which will create jobs in non-alcohol sectors, offsetting any losses experienced in alcohol sectors," study author Frank Chaloupka, professor of economics at the University of Illinois at Chicago, said in an association news release. According to

Chaloupka's team, excessive drinking causes about 88,000 deaths a year in the United States and cost the nation \$223.5 billion in 2006, or \$1.90 per drink. In contrast, total federal and state taxes on alcohol in 2006 totaled only about 12 cents per drink. [Medical Xpress](#)

## 'Being poor is not the same everywhere'

19 November - Young people growing up in impoverished neighborhoods who perceive their poor communities in a positive light report better health and well-being than those with worse perceptions of where they live, new research led by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health suggests. As part of the Well-Being of Adolescents in Vulnerable Environments (WAVE) study, researchers surveyed nearly 2,400 adolescents ages 15 to 19 in poor sections of five cities across the world: Baltimore; New Delhi, India; Ibadan, Nigeria; Johannesburg, South Africa; and Shanghai, China. The survey was conducted in 2013. ... Despite residing in one of the world's richest nations per capita, the researchers found that teens in Baltimore face high rates of mental health problems, substance use, early age of first sexual experience and pregnancy, and sexual violence. Contrast that with adolescents in New Delhi, India, a city in a significantly less prosperous nation, where the teens report little depression, cigarette smoking, pregnancy or sexual violence. [Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health News](#)

## Drowning: 'Hidden childhood killer'

17 November - Drowning is one of the 10 leading causes of death for children and young people across the world, a World Health Organization (WHO) report reveals. The global survey suggests it claims more than 372,000 lives each year - with children under five most at risk. WHO officials say it is a hidden childhood killer, leading to more deaths among under-15s than tuberculosis or measles in 2012. They say more needs to be done to tackle this preventable loss of life. [BBC News](#)

## Firestorm erupts in anti-smoking Massachusetts town

17 November - The outrage is aimed at a proposal by the local Board of Health that could make Westminister the first town in the country where no one could buy cigarettes, e-cigarettes, cigars and chewing tobacco. The uproar stems not from a desire by people here to smoke — only 17 percent do (a smidge higher than the statewide average). Many say they have never touched tobacco and find the habit disgusting. Rather, they perceive the ban as a frontal assault on their individual liberties. And they say it would cripple the eight retailers in town who sell tobacco products. [New York Times](#)

## How one Australian symphony orchestra protects players' ears

19 November - A program to protect Queensland Symphony Orchestra players in Australia from hearing loss is producing encouraging results, according to a new study. ... Nine years ago, the orchestra started ongoing noise exposure monitoring, data reviews and plotting noise maps for concert halls and orchestra pits where the musicians played over a three-

year period. ... They investigated how the orchestra was laid out and whether or not using risers or acoustic screens would mitigate some of the noise exposure and the extent to which player seating could be rotated periodically. Risers enable sound to travel from the rear of the orchestra to the audience without having to push through rows of musicians, O'Brien said. They also supplied high-quality earplugs specifically designed for musicians, and the orchestra formed a "noise committee" with musicians and representatives to evaluate how the interventions were affecting musical performance. For the new study, researchers analyzed the orchestra archives since 2005, used player and management focus groups and an interview with the program's administrator to assess how effective the conservation program has been. In the most recent poll, seven percent of the musicians said they always used earplugs, 55 percent reported using earplugs occasionally and 11 percent said they still never used them, according to the results in the *Annals of Occupational Hygiene*. [Reuters](#)

## Most heavy drinkers are not alcoholics, U.S. study finds

20 November - Contrary to popular opinion, only 10 percent of U.S. adults who drink too much are alcoholics, according to a federal study released on Thursday, a finding that could have implications for reducing consumption of beer, wine and liquor. While many people think that most, if not all, heavy drinkers are alcoholics, medical specialists have long suspected that belief is incorrect, said Robert Brewer, an author of a study by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that analyzed self-reported data from 138,100 U.S. adults. The study found that 90 percent of heavy drinkers fell short of the criteria for alcoholism. Women who have eight or more drinks per week and men who have 15 or more are considered heavy drinkers. ... Only a third of those who admitted binge drinking 10 or more times in the previous month were alcoholics, the study found. The CDC defines binge drinking as consuming four drinks for women and five drinks for men in a single occasion. [Reuters](#)

## New tool may predict your risk of heart disease

14 November - Most people would want to know if they have an increased risk of a heart attack, and now researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health have developed an online tool that may help individuals predict their risk as well as help them learn how lifestyle choices influence the danger. The researchers examined health data from approximately 100,000 people over 20 years to develop a risk model. They then developed a 5-minute online assessment tool called The Healthy Heart Score to illustrate how a person's diet, exercise level, and habits play a role in heart disease risk. ... The score is based on nine critical diet and lifestyle factors that can impact a person's risk of developing cardiovascular disease in the next 20 years. The factors include smoking, weight, exercise, and intake of alcohol, fruits and vegetables, whole grains, nuts, sugary beverages, and red and processed meat. [KTIC Radio](#) (original article in the [Journal of the American Heart Association](#))

## Obesity 'costing same as smoking'

20 November - The worldwide cost of obesity is about the same as smoking or armed conflict and greater than both alcoholism and climate change, research has suggested. The McKinsey Global Institute said it cost £1.3tn, or 2.8% of annual economic activity - it cost the UK £47bn. Some 2.1bn people - about 30% of the world's population - were overweight or obese, the researchers added. They said measures that relied less on individual responsibility should be used to tackle the problem. [BBC News](#)

## Sleep's link to learning and memory traced to brain chemistry

20 November - ... During sleep, the brain produces chemicals that are important to memory and relives events we want to remember, scientists reported this week at the Society for Neuroscience meeting in Washington D.C. ... Jennifer Choi Tudor from the University of Pennsylvania. At the meeting, Tudor presented a study involving a brain chemical (known as 4EBP2) that is produced during sleep and is thought to play a role in remembering new information. Previous experiments have shown that sleep-deprived mice have memory problems and lower levels of this chemical. So the team tried injecting the chemical into the brains of mice, then deprived them of sleep. "With the injection, their memory is normal," Tudor says. ... [New] memories can be formed during sleep, [Karim] Benchenane says — it also suggests a new way to treat people who have post-traumatic stress disorder and often have a negative association with a particular experience. It might be possible to eliminate that negative association during sleep by providing a pleasurable feeling every time they dream about that experience. [NPR](#)

[top of page...](#)

### USAFRICOM

---

## Democratic Republic of the Congo: DR Congo declares itself Ebola-free



16 November - The Democratic Republic of Congo has declared its three-month Ebola outbreak officially over after 42 days without recording a new case of the disease. Congo's outbreak, which killed 49 of the 66 people infected in the remote northwestern Equateur province, is unrelated to the outbreak in West Africa, where at least 5,177 people are known to have died in the worst Ebola outbreak on record. "No new cases have been registered since October 4," Health Minister Felix Kabange told reporters in Kinshasa on

Saturday. "After 42 days of active searching, the government declares...the end of the outbreak of the Ebola virus," he added. Forty-two days is the internationally-accepted period for declaring Ebola over as it represents two full cycles of the maximum possible incubation period of the disease. [Al Jazeera](#)

## South Sudan and Madagascar: Poliovirus

14 November - In separate and unrelated events, circulating vaccine-derived polioviruses (cVDPVs) have been confirmed in South Sudan and Madagascar.

**South Sudan:** In South Sudan, 2 cases due to cVDPV type 2 (cVDPV2) have been confirmed. The strains were isolated from 2 acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) cases in Unity state. ... Both cases are from an internally-displaced persons camp in Unity state. Unity state has been affected by civil unrest, leading to population displacements and declining vaccination coverage in most of the areas...

**Madagascar:** In Madagascar, cVDPV type 1 (cVDPV1) has been confirmed after the virus was isolated from 1 case of AFP (onset of paralysis on 29 September 2014) and 3 healthy contacts. ... An estimated more than 25% of children remain under-immunized against poliovirus in the country. [WHO](#)

## Zimbabwe: Stealing lives

20 November - Zimbabwe has one of the highest rates of HIV and AIDS in the world; nearly 15 percent of the population carry the virus. Hundreds of thousands of Zimbabweans are kept alive by anti-retroviral drugs (ARVs) given freely by aid agencies on condition that they are not re-sold and that they are used for treating those in need. The drugs have played a vital role in stabilising a situation that was running out of control a decade ago, citing the death rate by more than two-thirds. However, any interruption in the supply of those drugs to a patient can seriously affect their health. ... Which is why it is so disturbing that the regular supply of ARV is reportedly being disrupted by theft and corruption. ... [The] medicines are somehow being siphoned out of hospitals, clinics and the national pharmaceutical network and then sold on the black market – often for use as recreational narcotics. [Al Jazeera](#)

[top of page...](#)

**USCENTCOM**

---

## Afghanistan: Report - Sub-standard medicine floods Afghan market

19 November - Half of all medicine available on the Afghan market has either been smuggled into the country or made under sub-standard conditions in neighboring Pakistan, according to a report released on Wednesday. Up to 300 companies in Pakistan produce

poor quality drugs exclusively for Afghanistan because their products do not meet Pakistani government standards, said the report by the Independent Joint Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee, a joint body set up by the Afghan government and international community. Since there is no Afghan government regulation of pharmaceuticals, the medicine can be sold freely in Afghanistan, it said. [Yahoo! News](#)

## Egypt: Second woman dies of bird flu in Egypt

18 November - An Egyptian woman has died of H5N1 bird flu after coming into contact with infected birds, the second death from the disease in two days and the third in the country this year, state newspaper Al-Ahram reported. The 30-year-old woman was from the province of Minya, south of Cairo, the health ministry said in a statement reported by Al-Ahram on its website. She died in a hospital in the southern city of Assiut. A 19-year-old woman died of bird flu on Monday in Assiut. The ministry was quoted by Al-Ahram as saying that they have identified a total of seven cases of the virus this year, including the three who died. [Al Jazeera](#)

## In shift, Pakistanis fleeing war flow into beleaguered Afghanistan

15 November - Through three decades of war, waves of Afghans have fled their homes along the eastern border areas, many of them seeking shelter in the Pakistani tribal regions next door. Last summer another wave of refugees surged through the area. But in a reversal, it is Pakistanis, not Afghans, who are fleeing war at home. ... The tribal communities on both sides of the border are Pashtun, and many of the refugees from the Pakistani side have found shelter with relatives or sympathetic families on the Afghan side, mostly in Khost and Paktika Provinces. In some cases, refugees have been able to rent or borrow a patch of land or a walled compound for their families and some livestock. But the poorest — about 3,000 families, according to the United Nations refugee agency — are perched in Gulan Camp, a stretch of rough stones and reed bushes in the Gorbuz district of Khost, just a few miles from the border. [New York Times](#)

[top of page...](#)

### **USEUCOM**

---

## Russia: Why Putin might blame the U.S. for Russia's drugs problem

14 November - Another record poppy crop in Afghanistan, already the source of 90 percent of the world's heroin, threatens to exacerbate the drug problem in Russia and stoke tensions between President Vladimir Putin and the U.S. As the biggest market for illicit

opiates, Russia is in the front line as the U.S. withdraws its troops from Afghanistan after spending an estimated \$7.6 billion in a failed attempt to curb narcotics production. Russia now faces a public health crisis and a rise in crime stoked by the flow of Afghan heroin, Yuri Fedotov, executive secretary of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, said Nov. 12 at a briefing in Vienna. The U.S. special inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction, John Sopko, visited Fedotov this week to give his assessment of the lost drug war. "This failure in Afghanistan affects what I call the new Cold War with Russia," said Robert Legvold, who led an effort by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences to reformulate U.S. policy on Russia. "It supports the views expressed by Putin and his circle that U.S. foreign policy has been intentionally destructive." [Bloomberg](#)

## United Kingdom: Evaluation of the surveillance system for undiagnosed serious infectious illness (USII) in intensive care units, 2011 to 2013

20 November - Emerging infections are a potential risk during mass gathering events due to the congregation of large numbers of international travellers. To mitigate this risk for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, a sentinel surveillance system was developed to identify clusters of emerging infections presenting as undiagnosed serious infectious illness (USII) in intensive care units (ICUs). ... Between 11 July 2011 and 10 January 2013, 34 cases were reported. Of these, 22 remained classified as USII at the time of the evaluation, none of which were still hospitalised. No clusters were identified. The 22 USII cases had no association with the Games, suggesting that they represented the background level of USII in the area covered by the surveillance. This corresponded to an annualised rate of 0.39 cases/100,000 population and a PPV of 65%. Clinicians involved in the surveillance reported high acceptability levels. The USII surveillance model could be a useful public health tool in other countries and during mass gathering events for identifying potential clusters of emerging infections. [Eurosurveillance](#)

## United Kingdom: Public Health England to scan thousands of homes in Gloucestershire for radioactive gas radon

19 November - Thousands of homes in Gloucestershire will be given a chance to test their house for the presence of radioactive gas. Public Health England (PHE) said it is targeting 18,000 homes in the county to test for the gas radon. ... A spokesman for PHE said scientists estimate a higher than usual chance that homes in those areas will have high radon levels. Neil McColl, head of Dosimetry Services at the PHE's Centre for Radiation, Chemicals and Environmental Hazards, said: "It has long been known that the Cotswolds and parts of Gloucestershire are radon hotspots. "Parts of Cornwall, Aberdeenshire and West Oxfordshire also have high levels and over the years we have worked with people there to help them find out if their home is affected and if it is, to take action to reduce their radon levels. [Gloucestershire Echo](#)

[top of page...](#)

## Mexico detects first case of mosquito-borne chikungunya virus

15 November - Mexico has detected its first domestic case of the painful mosquito-borne viral disease chikungunya in the southwest of the country, the state government of Chiapas said on Saturday. ... The government of Chiapas, which borders Guatemala, said an 8 year old girl became the first person to contract the disease in [Mexico](#), and that she was treated in hospital in the town of Arriaga. The girl has since been released. [Reuters](#)

## U.S.: Colorado hospital giant Centura Health to stop hiring tobacco users

20 November - One of Colorado's largest health care systems, Centura Health, joined a national trend Thursday by announcing it won't hire tobacco users after Dec. 31, yet questions remain about discriminating against employees to create healthier workplaces. Growing numbers of U.S. companies, especially hospitals, are refusing to hire smokers, and many more are considering bans, say experts in workplace legal issues. Some justify the ban because smoking is the leading cause of preventable death, illness and disability in the United States. ... Yet privacy-rights advocates, including the American Civil Liberties Union, are uneasy with employers dictating employees' choices away from the workplace if they don't affect job performance. And singling out smokers begs the question about what other unhealthy personal choices and traits employers might try to regulate — weight, cholesterol, blood glucose levels, vegetarianism, exercise regimes? [Denver Post](#)

## U.S.: Fewer infants dying than before, CDC reports

19 November - More babies are being born at full term, resulting in fewer infant deaths, U.S. health officials reported Wednesday. The death rate among infants dropped 4 percent between 2006 and 2011, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. However, the number of fetal deaths -- defined in this report as deaths of fetuses at 20 weeks' gestation or later, and commonly referred to as stillbirths -- stayed about the same from 2006 through 2012. "Although the fetal death rate has remained essentially unchanged from 2006 through 2012, the continued decline in infant deaths is noteworthy," said study author Elizabeth Gregory, a health statistician at the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics. [Medline Plus](#)

## U.S.: Photos of insects reveal extraordinary beauty



19 November - ... [The] USGS began to inventory all the North American bee species in 2001, in part because of the insects' importance to the U.S. agriculture industry. Their work got an important boost when they encountered the work of the U.S. Army's Public Health Command, where, in 2008, molecular biologist Tony Gutierrez devised a camera system that would enable soldiers throughout the world to take detailed photos of biting insects. Disease is a major concern for the Army, and Gutierrez needed to create better identification methods to discover if the mosquito that bit a soldier in the field, for instance, was one of the handful out of 80,000 species in the world that could actually transmit disease. [Mother Earth News](#)

## U.S.: Public Health strongly recommends travelers to Hawaii get measles vaccine

17 November - The Department of Public Health and Social Services (DPHSS) has been informed of an outbreak of measles in Hawaii. As of November 10, 2014, the Hawaii State Department of Health reported that there have been 11 cases of measles. Of the 11 cases of measles, five were imported from Bali, Indonesia; the Philippines and Los Angeles, California. ... The DPHSS recommends that persons traveling to Hawaii ensure they are vaccinated for measles (given in combination with the measles and mumps vaccines) 2 weeks before departing. [Pacific News Center](#)

## U.S.: Report - Child homelessness surges in the US

17 November - The number of homeless children in the US has surged in recent years to an all-time high, amounting to one child out of every 30, according to a comprehensive state-by-state report. The report, issued on Monday by the National Center on Family Homelessness [NCFH], says that nearly 2.5 million American children were homeless at some point in 2013. The rights organisation blames the country's high poverty rate, the lack of affordable housing and the impacts of pervasive domestic violence for the rise in displaced youth. The report's figures are based on the US Department of Education's latest count of 1.3 million homeless children in public schools, supplemented by estimates of homeless pre-school children not counted by the department. The problem is particularly severe in the state of California, which has one-eighth of the country's total population but accounts for more than one-fifth of the homeless children with a tally of nearly 527,000. [Al Jazeera](#)

## U.S. seniors' health poorest, global survey shows

19 November - Seniors in America have more chronic health problems and take more medications than seniors in 10 other industrialized countries do, according to a new global survey. The United States also stood out among the 11 nations surveyed by The

Commonwealth Fund for having more seniors struggling to get and afford the health care they need. Eighty-seven percent of U.S. adults who are 65 and older suffer from at least one chronic illness, and 68 percent have at least two illnesses, which were the highest rates found, the survey showed. Also, 53 percent of older Americans take at least four medications, another record high, and 21 percent spend at least \$2,000 in yearly out-of-pocket health care costs, which was second only to Switzerland. "The retirement of baby boomers means pressure on Medicare will intensify," Dr. David Blumenthal, president of The Commonwealth Fund, said during a news briefing Tuesday to announce the study findings, which were published online Nov. 19 in the journal *Health Affairs*. [Medline Plus](#)

## U.S.: Snow piles up in western New York, with more expected; at least 7 die

19 November - ... At least seven people died as a result of the weather, according to local authorities. Four of the victims had cardiac problems, including an elderly man who needed treatment but could not be taken to a hospital in time. In Erie County, which includes Buffalo, a 46-year-old man was found dead inside his car buried under 15 feet of snow in Alden, according to county officials. With another blast of snow expected overnight, dumping as much as three more feet of snow in some places, Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo warned that people could be trapped inside for days. [New York Times](#)

[top of page...](#)

### USPACOM

---

## China: Nurses stabbed to death at China hospital

20 November - Six nurses and a co-worker at a Chinese hospital have been knifed to death by another member of staff at a female employees' dormitory, state media said. The man who carried out Thursday's attack in the resort town of Beidaihe in the northern province of Hebei told police he had "a history of mental illness", state news agency Xinhua said. The suspect was named as Li Xiaolong by state broadcaster China Central Television (CCTV), adding he was about 27 and had been detained by police. [Al Jazeera](#)

## Japan: Study - Fukushima health risks underestimated



15 November - "Hot spots" of nuclear radiation still contaminate parts of Fukushima Prefecture, according to findings from the latest Greenpeace radiation monitoring mission near the Daiichi nuclear power plant that experienced a melt down after an earthquake and tsunami in March 2011. Experts from the environmental organisation

also claim that authorities have consistently underestimated the amount of contamination and the health risks involved. Greenpeace will use these results to try to persuade local governments with nuclear power plants in their districts to resist lobbying from the central government to have them reactivated. All 50 of Japan's remaining nuclear plants were shut down following the 2011 disaster. ... Heinz Smitai, a nuclear physicist, Greenpeace campaigner and participant in the radiation monitoring mission, told foreign journalists at an October 30 press conference in Tokyo that radiation hot spots exist as far as 60 kilometres from the site of the disaster. [Al Jazeera](#)

## Malaysia: Born and jailed in Malaysia - A refugee's fear

20 November - ... Malaysian immigration law makes no distinction between undocumented migrants, asylum seekers or refugees; all are considered illegal and vulnerable to detention and deportation. Nor is Malaysia a signatory to the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees. As foreigners, most are expected to pay full fees for medical care, although those registered as refugees with the UNHCR are able to get a 50 percent discount. ... Community groups and NGOs representing people from Myanmar, the Middle East and Sri Lanka said they are aware of a number of cases of women without formal documentation detained after giving birth at the general hospital with some spending more than three months in detention. The issue is expected to be on the agenda of Dainius Puras, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health, during his visit to Malaysia, which concludes in early December. [Al Jazeera](#)

[top of page...](#)

### USSOUTHCOM

---

## Brazil: Fears of a new Chikungunya viral strain in Brazil with the coming of summer

14 November - The Chikungunya outbreak which continues to affect thousands of Caribbean residents since it first appeared in St. Martin last year has been relatively self-limiting in the United States, due to the fact that the current strain only spreads through the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito vector, which is uncommon on the US Eastern seaboard. But recent diagnoses of a new viral strain in Brazil may turn the current hemispheric spread of the crippling disease on its head. The strain – which is prevalent in some African states and which has been the cause of several outbreaks in South-east Asian countries – readily infects the *Aedes albopictus* mosquito, a hardier species which is common along the US East Coast, and which is adapted to colder climates. Brazil has recorded over 200 cases of Chikungunya – predominantly in the country's east-coast Bahia state – but according to Kansas State University virologist Stephen Higgs, the African strain in Brazil has not yet developed the type of dangerous mutations observed in South-east Asia. Such mutations could make the strain up to 100 times more infectious to mosquitoes, says Higgs, allowing

the vectors to become more easily infected and pass the virus on to humans. The virus itself has been shown to develop rapid adaptive mutations, underscoring fears of eventual epidemic circulations of the new strain. [Merco Press](#)

[top of page...](#)

[U.S. Military](#) | [Global](#) | [Influenza](#) | [Veterinary/Food Safety](#) | [Wellness](#) | [Contact Us](#)

[USAFRICOM](#) | [USCENTCOM](#) | [USEUCOM](#) | [USNORTHCOM](#) | [USPACOM](#) | [USSOUTHCOM](#)

The *Army Public Health Weekly Update* does not analyze the information as to its strategic or tactical impact on the US Army and is not a medical intelligence product. Medical intelligence is available from the [National Center for Medical Intelligence](#).

External Links: The appearance of external hyperlinks does not constitute endorsement by the U.S. Army of this Web site or the information, products, or services contained therein. For other than authorized activities such as military exchanges and MWR sites, the U.S. Army does not exercise any editorial control over the information you may find at these locations. Such links are provided consistent with the stated purpose of this product.

Although Health Information Operations avoids links to sites that may be blocked, all sites may not be accessible from all locations. While we verify the links at the time of publication, we cannot guarantee that they will be active in the future.

Articles appearing in the Update do not necessarily represent US Army Medical Department opinions/views, policy, or guidance, and should not be construed or interpreted as being endorsed by the US Army Medical Department.

The *Army Public Health Weekly Update* is published by the Health Information Operations Program, Deputy Chief of Staff for Communication, United States Army Public Health Command.

