

23 August 2013

Army Public Health Weekly Update

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.

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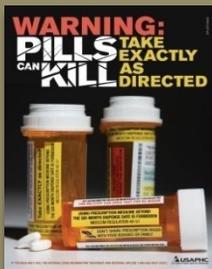
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Ready and Resilient Campaign: Polypharmacy

Polypharmacy is prescriptions for four or more medications, including one or more opioids within the previous 30 days; prescriptions for four or more medications affecting mental state and central nervous system depressants within the previous 30 days; or three or more emergency room visits in the past year in which an opioid was prescribed at each visit.

Increased medication use is a societal problem shared by the Army, which can result in prescription abuse and negative outcomes. Risks associated with the use of some of these medications, specifically drugs affecting mental state and CNSDs include not only misuse and abuse, but also dependence, potential for withdrawal, and thinking impairment. Army healthcare providers must consider the risks and benefits when prescribing these medications.

STAND-TO!



- Experts urge mass dog vaccination to eradicate rabies
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WELLNESS

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- U.S.: CDC - 300,000 Americans are diagnosed with Lyme Disease each year
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USPACOM

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- China to launch fresh pharmaceutical bribery probe
- China: Wuhai City coal complex shows costs of China's energy demands
- Dengue fever sweeps Southeast Asia
- India: Alarming 80% rise in dengue cases this year
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- Japan: Wrecked Fukushima plant springs highly radioactive water leak
- Philippines: 40 inches of rain deluges the Philippines

**Public Health
Preparedness: Are
We Ready for
Disaster?**

Despite the continued need for a strong emergency response infrastructure to combat natural disasters, reemerging diseases, pandemics and food-borne illnesses, state health department budgets have been shrinking.

Is the nation prepared for future disasters? What can we learn from past emergencies, such as Hurricane Sandy, to be more prepared in the future?

Three speakers address these questions and a list of offsite materials is provided.

Alliance for Health Reform and The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

USSOUTHCOM

- [Dengue epidemic looms for Central American region](#)
- [Encephalitis: 2010 outbreak in Panama raises concern](#)

U.S. MILITARY

Brain lesions more common in high-altitude pilots, study finds

19 August - Pilots of U.S. Air Force U-2 reconnaissance planes may be at risk of developing brain lesions, a new study suggests. America's involvement in two wars has increased the workload of U.S. airmen, and cases of decompression sickness -- a potential hazard of high-altitude flying -- have tripled over the past two decades, the researchers say. But this study suggests that U-2 pilots in general are more vulnerable to bruises in the brain, a sign that decompression damages the brain even in the absence of illness. The findings, published in the Aug. 20 issue of the journal *Neurology*, indicate that decompression sends tiny bubbles known as emboli into the brain where they don't necessarily make people ill but may still cause harm, said study lead author Dr. Stephen McGuire, a neurologist with the U.S. Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine in San Antonio, Texas. [Medline Plus](#)

Chemicals found on Okinawa likely not Agent Orange



15 August - Chemical barrels recently unearthed on former U.S. military land on Okinawa most likely contained military maintenance shop and hospital waste, not Agent Orange as many feared, according to an American expert on the herbicide. About two dozen rusted Dow Chemical Company barrels found under a soccer field in Okinawa City appear to be part of a former landfill used by Kadena Air Base for solvents as well as burnt plastic and other waste, according to Alvin Young, a retired Air Force colonel and Department of Defense consultant who has studied tactical herbicides for 30 years. [Stars and Stripes](#)

Fort Sill's tobacco cessation program focuses on the individual

12 August - ...Three years ago, Hodges came to Fort Sill to take over the current tobacco cessation program – a two-hour class that ended with a certificate and prescription for varenicline, a drug to help ease nicotine withdrawals that's sold under the brand name Chantix. "There was no follow-up," said Hodges. "I knew we could do better." During the first few months, Hodges researched data on tobacco cessation, including the 2011 Department of Defense Survey of Health-Related Behaviors, which revealed that almost half of U.S. service members use tobacco products. She decided to use the American Lung Association's tobacco cessation program, Freedom from Smoking, as a model. Fort Sill's

Classified Version of the Weekly Update

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<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.

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tobacco cessation program expanded from one class to six weeks that also included one-on-one counseling. [MHS](#)

Mental disorders and mental health problems among recruit trainees, U.S. Armed Forces, 2000-2012

July 2013 - ...From 2000 to 2012, 49,999 active component recruit trainees were diagnosed with at least one mental disorder, and 7,917 had multiple mental disorder diagnoses. Annual incidence rates of at least one mental disorder decreased by approximately 37.4 percent over the last 13 years. Approximately 80.5 percent of all incident mental disorder diagnoses were attributable to adjustment disorders, depression, and "other" mental disorders. Rates of incident mental disorder diagnoses were higher in females than males. Even though the Army had the highest overall incidence rates of mental disorders, the Air Force had slightly higher rates for adjustment disorder, and the Navy had higher rates of alcohol abuse related disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, other psychoses, and personality disorders. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

The Army's newest mission: To transform the healthcare system

19 August - Army medical personnel are transforming the way they treat patients in the hopes of reducing preventable diseases and injuries, decreasing health care costs and ultimately leading the military and the nation to better health. Army leaders, soldiers, providers and staff members at all Army regional medical commands, major subordinate commands, medical treatment facilities and clinics received training Aug. 8 on new proactive approaches to addressing diseases and injuries. The Stand Up for Health Training Day provided a glimpse of this new focus of Army medicine. "We often find ourselves as a fix-it shop," said Lt. Gen. Patricia D. Horoho, Army surgeon general. "Almost 70 percent of the diseases we treat are attributable to preventable diseases." In the face of deep budget cuts, Horoho said this way of doing business must change. [MHS](#)

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GLOBAL

Camels may be source of deadly coronavirus



9 August - The [World Health Organization](#) said a recent study indicating that dromedary camels may be the source of the coronavirus is far from conclusive. WHO said investigations must continue into the exact origins of this disease, which so far has killed 46 of the 94 confirmed cases. The World Health Organization said it welcomed any study that can shed more light

on the coronavirus. But it adds the study, which suggests a possible linkage between the infection in camels and spread of the disease to humans, leaves many questions unanswered. [VOA](#)

Evidence supports pill to prevent some prostate cancers

14 August - Doctors have debated for years whether a drug that curbed the growth of some prostate cancers caused more serious ones to grow faster. Now, a long-term study calms those fears and raises the possibility that a cheap, generic pill could be used reduce prostate cancer risk. [NPR](#)

Industry ties raise questions about expert medical panels

14 August - When your doctor is looking to make a diagnosis or choose a treatment, she often checks to see what the experts recommend. Guidelines from these groups of leading doctors help the average physician decide if it's time to prescribe drugs to lower a patient's cholesterol or turn to medicines for someone's depression... [An analysis](#) just published by PLOS Medicine finds the majority of experts involved in 16 recently published guidelines had ties to industry. Most of the recommendations expanded the definitions of common illnesses, lowering the threshold for treatment. [NPR](#)

Insecticide-treated bed nets critical to global elimination of filariasis

22 August- [R]esearchers, including Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine professor James Kazura, MD, found that insecticide-treated bed nets reduce transmission of lymphatic filariasis to undetectable levels – even in the absence of additional medication...Ten years after villagers took their last [antifilarial] medication round, they received free bed nets as part of Papua New Guinea's national malaria control effort. In the 36 months that followed, Kazura and team saw a dramatic decrease in the number of infected mosquito bites per person. In fact, rates fell annually from as many as 325 to zero. Kazura and his colleagues ultimately concluded that transmission has stopped completely; they could find no mosquitoes harboring parasites capable of transmitting the disease.

[Infection Control Today](#)

Mers: Deadly coronavirus found in tomb bat



22 August - The deadly Mers coronavirus has been isolated in a bat in Saudi Arabia, scientists report. The virus was detected in a faecal sample taken from an Egyptian tomb bat, collected close to the home of the first known Mers victim... But while scientists found a genetic match, they

think it is unlikely that bats are responsible for passing the virus to humans. Instead they think the virus is spreading from the winged mammals to other animals before it is reaching people. Another piece of research... suggested that this intermediary animal could be the dromedary camel. [BBC News](#)

New compound holds great promise as Ebola treatment

21 August - Scientists have developed a promising treatment for Ebola hemorrhagic fever, a lethal disease spread by infected bats in western Africa. The experimental compound could become the first successful treatment for Ebola - even following the onset of severe symptoms. Ebola hemorrhagic fever is 90 percent fatal. By the time most people suddenly come down with symptoms including high fever, severe headache, body aches and respiratory symptoms, little can be done to save their lives. Scientists at the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases have developed an experimental compound, however, that may change the prognosis. [VOA](#)

New WHO report focuses on mental health



19 August - A new report by the World Health Organization (WHO) argues that humanitarian emergencies offer opportunities for improving peoples' lives through improving mental health services. The report is being released on World Humanitarian Day, August 19, in hopes

of ensuring that those faced with emergencies can recover and rebuild their lives even better than before. When conflicts and natural disasters trigger mental health problems, psychological help is needed, but usually is not available. Humanitarian agencies work hard to help people recover. But WHO found much of the support offered tends to be of short duration. [VOA](#)

Pill can prevent fatal TB in H.I.V. patients

19 August - An inexpensive daily pill can often fend off a lethal bout of tuberculosis in people with H.I.V., according to a large new study. The drug is isoniazid, a generic [antibiotic](#), and the World Health Organization has recommended a daily dose since 1998 for H.I.V. patients who harbor germs for tuberculosis but have no symptoms; full-blown TB is a leading killer of AIDS victims. But public health doctors in poor countries rarely bother. [New York Times](#)

Scientists may have cracked the case on Typhoid Mary

19 August - In the early part of the 20th century, Mary Mallon — perhaps better known as Typhoid Mary — infected over 50 people with typhoid fever while working as a cook, although she remained unaffected by the illness herself... A new study from the Stanford University School of Medicine and the University of California, San Francisco, has shown that it was Mary's own immune system — specifically cells called macrophages — that were hijacked by the salmonella bacteria, that turned her into one of these asymptomatic carriers. Macrophages have two modes: they repair damaged tissues and they eat invading bacteria. What the researchers discovered is that salmonella bacteria are not only resilient enough to survive the 'feeding frenzy' of the macrophages, but they're actually able to get inside the macrophages, live there and manipulating their genes to essentially 'flip a switch', changing them from their 'eating' mode to their 'healing' mode. [Yahoo! News](#)

Sudden death during sports more common among men

13 August - Men who run, cycle or play other recreational sports are 20 times more likely to die from a sudden heart problem than female recreational athletes, according to a new study. Although it's been known that sports-related sudden deaths are more common among men, some researchers have believed that's due to fewer women playing sports in the first place, the lead author of the report said. "I think our study is the first to demonstrate the low incidence of sudden death among women in the general population is not only related to a lower sport participation," said Dr. Eloi Marijon, who worked on the study at the Paris Cardiovascular Research Center at Georges Pompidou European Hospital.

[Reuters](#)

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INFLUENZA

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

- No additional infections with influenza A (H3N2) variant (H3N2v) virus were reported to CDC during week 32.
- During week 32, 5.6% of all deaths reported through the 122-Cities Mortality Reporting System were due to pneumonia and influenza. This percentage was below the epidemic threshold of 6.2% for week 32. [FluView](#)

DoD Global Laboratory-Based Influenza Surveillance Program

- During the month of July, 32 specimens were received from 19 locations. Results were finalized for 31 specimens from 19 locations. There were two specimens positive for influenza A (one A(H1N1)pdm09 and one A(H3N2)) and one parainfluenza
- To date this influenza season, 3,884 specimens have completed testing from 84 locations, of which 1,080 were positive for influenza A (958 A(H3N2), 112 A(H1N1)pdm09, five co-infections, and five A/not subtyped).
- To date this influenza season, 378 specimens were positive for influenza B. Of these, there were 114 B/Yamagata, 30 B/Victoria, and two B & enterovirus co-infections. The lineage is pending or unknown for 232 specimens.
- There have been 272 other respiratory viruses isolated (70 adenovirus, 91 RSV, 98 parainfluenza, and 13 enterovirus) cumulatively this season. [USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview

For weeks 31–32/2013:

- Fourteen countries reported low intensity and no geographic spread while Norway, Malta and the UK reported sporadic or local activity
- Two countries tested six sentinel specimens, none of which was positive for influenza virus.
- Since week 21/2013, six hospitalised confirmed influenza cases have been reported by two countries. [Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

Google.org: Flu Trends

21 August – Estimates of flu activity based on certain Internet search queries indicate that the level of flu activity in the northern hemisphere ranges from minimal to low (Norway). In the southern hemisphere, flu activity is moderate in South Africa, Australia and New Zealand and high in Chile. [Google.org Flu Trends](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For the week ending 17 August 2013:

- Influenza: No cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza (A/H3) 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](#)

PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

Ducks were bird flu 'melting pot'

21 August - Ducks were the melting pot of viruses that led to the new bird flu emerging in China early this year, according to Chinese scientists tracking the evolution of the virus. Ducks picked up viruses from migrating birds and passed them onto chickens... Their report said: "Domestic ducks seem to act as key intermediate hosts by acquiring and maintaining diverse influenza viruses from migratory birds. "This probably led to outbreaks in chickens resulting in the rapid spread of the [virus] through live poultry markets which became the source of human infections." [BBC News](#)

Scientists find another flu virus in chickens in China



22 August - Scientists studying the H7N9 bird flu virus that has killed more than 40 people since March said on Wednesday they had discovered another H7-type virus lurking in chickens in China. Dubbed H7N7, the virus was able to infect mammals in a lab experiment, said the team,

warning H7 viruses "may pose threats beyond the current outbreak". "The continuing prevalence of H7 viruses in poultry could lead to the generation of highly pathogenic variants and further sporadic human infections," they wrote in the journal Nature... "If (we) let this H7N7 continue circulating in chickens, I am sure that human infection cases will occur," study co-author Yi Guan from the University of Hong Kong told AFP by email. "This virus could cause more severe infection than... H7N9, based on our animal experiment."

[Channel News Asia](#)

Nepal to cull 500,000 chickens near Kathmandu to combat major bird flu outbreak

16 August - Half a million chickens are to be culled in a district on the outskirts of Nepal's capital Kathmandu, as efforts to combat a major outbreak of bird flu are stepped up. Tens of thousands of birds have already been killed in what government officials have described as one of the country's worst outbreaks of avian flu. Now authorities in the Himalayan nation have declared the area of Bhaktapur an emergency zone. Some 62 cases of bird flu have been recorded at 250 poultry farms in three districts in the past few weeks, officials said. A spokesman for the Directorate of Animal Health said the government ordered the cull to be stepped up after a week-long ban imposed on the sales of poultry products failed to control the H5N1 virus. [Radio Australia](#)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

Company linked to outbreak stops shipping to U.S.



12 August - The company that distributes a salad mix linked to as many as 535 cases of a diarrheal disease has stopped making and shipping salad mixes from Mexico, the Food and Drug Administration said Monday. The salad mix linked to the outbreak was produced by Taylor Farms de Mexico, based about 180 miles

north of Mexico City in San Miguel de Allende. It is the Mexican subsidiary of an American food-service company, Taylor Farms of Salinas, Calif...The FDA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have not definitively linked the other 296 cases in 16 other states to

the salad mix, but the company on Friday voluntarily agreed to stop shipping the mix to the United States and will not start again without telling the FDA, the company said in a statement on its website. [USA Today](#)

Disaster preparedness for your pet

19 August - Leaving pets out of evacuation plans can put pets, pet owners, and first responders in danger. Even if you try to create a safe place for them, pets left behind during a disaster are likely to be injured, lost, or worse. It is your responsibility as a pet owner to find out what type of shelters and assistance are available in your area to accommodate pets and to include pets in your disaster plan to keep them safe during an emergency. [CDC](#)

Experts urge mass dog vaccination to eradicate rabies



15 August - Last year a team of researchers from Peru and the U.S. made a discovery that challenged one of the most widely held assumptions about rabies—that the virus is nearly always fatal unless doctors administer a vaccine before it reaches the brain. Based on the results of blood tests, the scientists learned that half a dozen villagers in a remote part of the Peruvian Amazon had previously been infected—probably through bites from vampire bats, which are common in the area. But instead of suffering the agonizing deaths for which rabies is infamous, the villagers had recovered and apparently developed immunity to further infection... [R]esearchers now recognize that not all rabies infections are equal or universally fatal. Many different animals, including dogs, bats, foxes and raccoons, carry various strains of the rabies virus. The varieties hosted by bats and foxes appear to be weaker, and some people's immune systems may be able to defeat them without a vaccine. Dogs, however, carry a more virulent strain that has rarely been vanquished without medical intervention. To this day, canines remain the largest and most dangerous group of rabies carriers worldwide. [Scientific American](#)

Salmonella outbreak linked to New Mexico poultry hatchery

20 August - A national outbreak of salmonella has been linked to an eastern New Mexico hatchery that sells live baby chickens, ducks and other poultry by mail and supplies them to feed stores, state health officials announced Monday. The state Department of Health said a strain of salmonella that's infected more than 300 people in 37 states was found in a duck pen at Privett Hatchery in Portales. No deaths have been reported, but 51 people have been hospitalized, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Children ages 10 and younger account for nearly three-fifths of those who've become ill... Paul Ettestad, state public health veterinarian, said the hatchery was most likely the source of the outbreak. However, he said questions remain because federal officials have found that the people sickened with salmonella had purchased baby poultry at 113 feed store locations that were supplied by 18 mail order hatcheries in several states. [WJLA](#)

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Aspirin tied to smaller lung and colon cancer tumors

16 August - Colon and lung cancer patients who regularly took low-dose aspirin before their diagnosis tended to have less advanced tumors, in a new study. Scientists already knew that aspirin was tied to a decreased risk of death for people with colon cancer, said senior author Yudi Pawitan. "We showed evidence that it is also beneficial for lung cancer, and has both early and late protective effects," Pawitan, of the department of medical epidemiology and biostatistics at the Karolinska Institutet in Stockholm, Sweden, told Reuters Health. However, the finding doesn't mean everyone should be taking aspirin to ward off advanced cancer, researchers said. [Medline Plus](#)

BPA, DEHP in packaging tied to metabolic ills

19 August - Childhood and adolescent exposure to potentially endocrine-disrupting chemicals found in food and drink packaging was associated with obesity and insulin resistance, two groups of researchers reported ... Bisphenol A has been used to coat metal food containers and in dental sealants and plastic toys, but is no longer permitted in products such as baby bottles following an FDA ban. Previous research has linked exposure to BPA with diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and obesity in adults, but less is known about the effects of early-life exposures. [Medpage Today](#)

Extra load on your back to help build bones



19 August - ...Several small studies have shown exercise with a weighted vest increases bone-mineral density in older women and improves balance. The evidence isn't conclusive, says Felicia Cosman, senior clinical director of the National Osteoporosis Foundation, but it's logical to think the vests would be beneficial because "bone responds to the magnitude of the force put on it." [Wall Street Journal](#)

FDA approves new drug to treat HIV infection

12 August - The U.S. Food and Drug Administration today approved Tivicay (dolutegravir), a new drug to treat HIV-1 infection. Tivicay is an integrase strand transfer inhibitor that interferes with one of the enzymes necessary for HIV to multiply. It is a pill taken daily in combination with other antiretroviral drugs. Tivicay is approved for use in a broad population of HIV-infected patients. [FDA](#)

Induced labor may increase risk of autism in offspring

12 August - Having labor that is induced or augmented may lead to a greater chance of having a child with autism, new research reveals. The U.S. government estimates that [one in 50 school-aged kids has an autism spectrum disorder](#), which is the designation for a group

of developmental brain disorders. All the conditions include some level of impairment when it comes to social skills, communication and behavioral issues. Researchers looked at data from the North Carolina Detailed Birth Record and Education Research databases, which included 625,042 live births linked with school records. Of the group, 5,500 children had been diagnosed with autism. [CBS News](#)

Lyme disease cases are 10 times higher than reported, CDC says

19 August - About 300,000 people are diagnosed with Lyme disease transmitted through tick bites each year, 10 times higher than cases reported to the U.S. government. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is analyzing medical claims data for 22 million insured people and surveying labs and the general public to better understand the burden of Lyme disease. Only about 30,000 cases are reported to the agency each year, the CDC said in a statement today. Lyme disease is concentrated in the U.S. Northeast and upper Midwest, with 96 percent of cases in 13 states, the CDC said. Symptoms include fever, headache, fatigue and a "bull's-eye" rash. The early CDC estimate supports studies published in the 1990s indicating the true number of cases of Lyme disease is three to 12 times higher than what is officially reported, the agency said. [Bloomberg Businessweek](#)

NIH study finds chronic alcohol use shifts brain's control of behavior

22 August - Chronic alcohol exposure leads to brain adaptations that shift behavior control away from an area of the brain involved in complex decision-making and toward a region associated with habit formation, according to a new study conducted in mice by scientists at the National Institutes of Health. The finding provides a biological mechanism that helps to explain compulsive alcohol use and the progression to alcohol dependence... These structural changes were associated with changes in synaptic plasticity, the brain's ability to change in response to experience, and reduced activity of endocannabinoid receptors, which are part of a signaling system that may play a role in sensation, mood, and memory.

[NIH](#)

One in 10 Americans have taken drugs prescribed for others: poll

15 August - ...One in 10 Americans admit taking a prescription drug they have not been prescribed, and a quarter of those people have used them just to get high, according to an ongoing [Reuters/Ipsos poll](#). While about six in ten Americans who used another person's prescriptions did so for pain relief, a fifth took them to sleep or to manage stress and anxiety, the poll showed... The poll indicated it is not difficult to get hold of such drugs even without a prescription. About two thirds of those who used other people's prescribed drugs were given them by a family member, friend or acquaintance, the poll showed. Only about 14 percent were either taken without permission or purchased. [Reuters](#)

Oral health has role in HPV infection

22 August - Poor oral health is an independent risk factor for oral infection with human papillomavirus (HPV), including the strains associated with cancer, researchers reported. In a nationally representative survey, people who reported they had poor oral health had a 56% increase in the risk of HPV infection in the mouth and throat, according to Thanh Cong Bui, DrPH, and colleagues at the University of Texas Health Sciences Center in Houston. The increased risk was independent of other known risk factors, such as smoking and oral sex, Bui and colleagues reported in *Cancer Prevention Research*. "The good news is, this risk factor is modifiable," Bui said in a statement. "By maintaining good oral hygiene and good oral health, one can prevent HPV infection and subsequent HPV-related cancers." [Medpage Today](#)

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USAFRICOM

Somalia: UN warns of 'explosive' polio outbreak



16 August - The UN has warned of a severe outbreak of polio in Somalia, days after a medical charity pulled out of the country, citing insecurity. At least 105 cases of polio have been recorded in Somalia this year - almost half the number of cases around the world in 2012. The World

Health Organization is trying to eradicate polio and the number of cases has fallen dramatically. Most of the Somali cases are in areas controlled by Islamist group al-Shabab.

[BBC](#)

Somalia: Violence causes Doctors Without Borders to exit Somalia

14 August - The aid group Doctors Without Borders said Wednesday that it's closing all operations in Somalia after 22 years because of the increase in violent attacks and abuse against its staff... Over the past 22 years, the nonprofit has provided basic and emergency health care to millions in the country through chronic wars and famines. "Armed groups and civilians are increasingly supporting, tolerating and condoning the killing, assaulting and abuse of humanitarian aid workers," [Dr. Unni] Karunakara said. "We have reached our limits." Sixteen people working for the group have been killed in the last 22 years. Dozens have been attacked. [NPR](#)

Uganda: Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever, confirmed case

19 August - The Ministry of Health informs the general public that a hemorrhagic fever outbreak has been confirmed in Omot sub-county, Agago district. Following tests done by the Uganda Virus Research Institute (UVRI), Entebbe, the samples obtained from one person have tested positive for Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever (CCHF) [virus infection].

[ProMED-mail](#)

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USCENTCOM

Afghanistan: Cholera outbreak in northeast Afghanistan

15 August - A cholera outbreak at a village in northeast Afghanistan has infected 1,492 people, killed a young woman and left another 100 in critical condition, a provincial official said Tuesday. Abdul Marouf Rasekh, a spokesman for the governor of Badakhshan province, said the outbreak began three days ago and was restricted to one town that has been quarantined... Rasekh said the source of the infection had been traced to a single spring of water that supplies the entire town's drinking water. Health authorities were bringing in water from nearby towns until the problem was solved. He said that 36 of the most serious cases have been taken to a hospital in the provincial capital of Faizabad and that the sole death so far was an 18-year old woman. [Denver Post](#)

Iraqi Kurdistan sets quota for Syria refugees: aid groups



20 August - The government of Iraqi Kurdistan has set an entry quota of 3,000 refugees a day to cope with an influx of Kurds fleeing the civil war in Syria, but there are signs many more are still coming in, aid agencies said on Tuesday. About 35,000 refugees, believed to be mainly Syrian Kurds, have entered Iraq since last Thursday, including an estimated 5,100, well over the cap, on Tuesday, the U.N. refugee agency UNHCR said. UNHCR officials told an internal U.N. meeting in Baghdad on Monday that up to 100,000 Syrian refugees could be expected to flee to Iraq within the next month, if the current pace continued, U.N. sources said. [Reuters](#)

Syria gas kills hundreds, U.N. Security Council to meet



21 August - Syria's opposition accused government forces of gassing hundreds of people near Damascus on Wednesday after rockets released deadly fumes over rebel-held suburbs, killing men, women and children as they slept. What would be the world's most lethal chemical weapons attack since the

1980s prompted an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council set for 1900 GMT... Images, including some by freelance photographers supplied to Reuters, showed scores of bodies - some of them small children - laid on the floor of a clinic with no visible signs of injuries. Some images showed people with foam around their mouths. Reuters was not able to verify the cause of their deaths. The Syrian government denied it had used chemical arms... Doctors interviewed described symptoms they believe point to sarin gas, one of the agents Western powers accuse Damascus of having in an undeclared chemical weapons stockpile. [Reuters](#)

Tajik border with Afghan province closed after cholera report

20 August - Tajikistan has temporarily closed the border it shares with Afghanistan's province of Badakhshan amid reports of a cholera outbreak there. A spokesman for the Tajik border guard service, Khushnud Rakhmatullaev, told journalists on August 20 that the border has been closed since August 19. Rakhmatullaev said the decision was made at the request of the health minister... Tajik and Russian media reports said last week that some 1,500 residents in Afghanistan's Badakhshan had been diagnosed with cholera. The reports said one patient has died and almost 40 are in serious condition. [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty](#)

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Glasgow 2014: Organisers plan 'smoke-free' games

10 August - The organisers of the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow have said the event will be entirely "smoke-free". It has decided to introduce tobacco controls at all competition venues and what it calls "venue perimeters". The policy that has been drawn up meets the requirements of the World Health Organisation for a smoke-free sporting event. The Scottish health minister Michael Matheson has praised the Games for its "progressive" smoking policy. [BBC](#)

Israel launches national campaign, vaccinates 30,000 children against polio

19 August - ...In the country of Israel, the government has launched a nationwide campaign to vaccinate children after discovering a rare new strain of polio circulating within the nation. The campaign, which started this past Sunday, successfully administered the polio vaccine to 30,000 children born after January 1, 2004... The rare polio virus that is currently circulating in Israel is believed to have come from Egypt. The virus was identified in Rahat's sewage this past May and health officials believe that it entered Israel in February. The officials from the Health Ministry stated that over a thousand of the people believed to be hosts of the virus are children under the age of 10. [Counsel & Heal](#)

Spain: Increase in gonorrhoea among very young adolescents, Catalonia, January 2012 to June 2013

15 August - Between January 2012 and June 2013, 27 sexually transmitted infections were reported in adolescents aged 13–15 years in Catalonia, Spain. In the first half of 2013, there were nine cases of gonorrhoea, while in the same period of 2012, there was one. In June 2013, two gonorrhoea cases aged 13–14 years, linked to a common source through a social network, were reported. The public health response should be adapted to this vulnerable population. [Eurosurveillance](#)

Tuberculosis 'time bomb' costs Europe billions annually



15 August - Europe is facing a multi-billion-euro time bomb of rising costs to control tuberculosis (TB) as drug-resistant forms of the lung disease spread, a pioneering study found. Often thought of as a disease of the past or one restricted to marginalized communities, TB is already inflicting annual direct costs of more than 500 million euros on the region and another 5.3 billion euros in productivity losses. The study, by health economists based in Germany, also suggests the economic burden of TB far outweighs the likely costs of investing in much-needed research to develop more effective medicines and vaccines — something they said governments and the drug industry should do urgently. [VOA](#)

United Kingdom researchers identify new TB markers



9 August - Researchers have found a new way to screen people for tuberculosis by identifying proteins released as diseased lungs break down. TB bacteria typically attack the lungs, and the damage they do causes transmission of the disease to others and can lead to the death of the patient. About one and a half million people die of tuberculosis each year. Researchers from Britain's University of Southampton, led by Paul Elkington, found increased amounts of collagen and elastin — key proteins in the lungs — in TB patients' sputum and blood. Elkington says

these markers of the disease may help in the development of new diagnostic tests and treatments. "This may permit population screening to find and treat highly infectious individuals to break the cycle of transmission, especially in developing world countries where TB is most prominent," he said. [VOA](#)

United Kingdom: Restrictions on health workers with HIV lifted as 'outdated' ban ends

15 August - Surgeons, [dentists](#), midwives and other healthcare workers who have HIV are to be allowed to perform all kinds of procedures on patients, following the lifting of an outdated ban that led in some cases to the loss of careers and livelihoods. It is more likely that somebody will be struck by lightning than be infected with HIV by their doctor or dentist, said chief medical officer Dame Sally Davies as she announced the change of policy.

[Guardian](#)

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U.S.: CDC - 300,000 Americans are diagnosed with Lyme Disease each year



19 August - Lyme disease is about 10 times more common than previously reported, health officials said Monday. As many as 300,000 Americans are actually diagnosed with Lyme disease each year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced. Usually, only 20,000 to 30,000 illnesses are reported each year. For many years, CDC officials have known that many doctors don't report every case and that the true count was probably much higher. The new figure is the CDC's most comprehensive attempt at a better estimate. The number comes from a survey of seven national laboratories, a national patient survey and a review of insurance information. [TIME](#)

U.S.: Florida issues warning about rare, brain-eating amoeba

15 August - While 12-year-old Zachary Reyna fights for his life against a brain-eating parasite, the Florida Department of Health has issued a warning for swimmers. High water temperatures and low water levels provide the perfect breeding ground for this rare amoeba, called *Naegleria fowleri*, officials said. They warned the public "to be wary when swimming, jumping or diving in freshwater" with these conditions. [CNN](#)

U.S.: Idaho wildfire rages into 12th day near Sun Valley ski resort

19 August - A wildfire that has forced the evacuation of more than 2,000 homes in central Idaho roared largely unchecked into a 12th day on Monday near the ski resort of Sun Valley, even though fire crews launched a big offensive against the blaze at the weekend. Firefighters took advantage of calmer winds and higher humidity levels on Sunday to attack the flames aggressively, but still ended the day with containment lines carved around less than 10 percent of the blaze's perimeter, fire officials said. The lightning-sparked fire has been raging since August 7 near Sun Valley and the adjacent tourist towns of Ketchum and Hailey. It has charred some 101,000 acres of parched sagebrush, grasslands and pine forests in the Sawtooth National Forest. On Sunday afternoon, local authorities had expected to lift a mandatory evacuation for 200 homes in two neighborhoods north of Hailey. They said those plans were on hold Sunday night as gusty winds threatened to breathe new life into the blaze. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: More measles cases linked to Tarrant County megachurch

21 August - The measles outbreak in Tarrant County [Texas] has jumped to neighboring Denton County, where five new cases were reported Wednesday. The toll has grown to 20 cases since last Thursday, when Tarrant's health department reported the first two... All 20 measles cases so far have been traced to the 1,500-member Eagle Mountain International Church in northeast Tarrant County, health officials said. The outbreak appears to be occurring within a group of families that has chosen not to get vaccinated, officials said... Of the 15 cases in Tarrant County, 11 of the infected people were not immunized against the measles... The measles outbreak originated from a man who traveled to Indonesia on a mission trip where he was exposed to the infectious disease. [Dallas News](#)

U.S. obesity leveling off, but at high rate, report

16 August - Obesity levels among adults appear to be holding steady across the United States, adding to recent evidence that the growth rate for U.S. waistlines is slowing, according to an analysis released on Friday. But within the holding pattern there is a dramatic rise in "extreme" obesity among adults and children. The annual "F as in Fat" report from the Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation found that the proportion of adults who are extremely obese - at least 100 pounds (45.4 kilograms) overweight - has climbed over the last three decades from 1.4 percent in the late 1970s to 6.3 percent in 2009-2010. [Reuters](#)

U.S.: Updated guidance for the evaluation of severe respiratory illness associated with Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV)

12 August - ...MERS-CoV, formerly called novel coronavirus, is a beta coronavirus that was first described in September 2012. As of August 12, 2013, 94 laboratory-confirmed cases have been reported to WHO. Of those cases, 49% (46) were fatal... CDC has changed its

criteria for who should be evaluated for MERS-CoV. In the previous guidance (HAN 348, dated June 7, 2013), CDC did not recommend MERS-CoV testing for people whose illness could be explained by another etiology. The new guidance states that, in patients who meet certain clinical and epidemiologic criteria, testing for MERS-CoV and other respiratory pathogens can be done simultaneously and that positive results for another respiratory pathogen should not necessarily preclude testing for MERS-CoV. The new guidance also clarifies recommendations for investigating clusters of severe acute respiratory illness when there is not an apparent link to a MERS-CoV case. Clusters* of patients with severe acute respiratory illness (e.g., fever and pneumonia requiring hospitalization) should be evaluated for common respiratory pathogens and reported to local and state health departments. If the illnesses remain unexplained, testing for MERS-CoV should be considered, in consultation with state and local health departments. [CDC](#)

U.S.: Voluntary recall for another compounding facility

12 August - Fifteen patients have been hospitalized in Texas after getting calcium gluconate injections, according to the Food and Drug Administration. The FDA has issued a national voluntary recall for all sterile-use products produced by Specialty Compounding LLC, based in Cedar Park, Texas. The people hospitalized have a bacterial infection in their blood, and doctors think it might have come from the injection. A culture taken from a sample of this injection shows bacterial growth that is consistent with a *Rhodococcus species* (PDF) of bacteria, according to the FDA. [CNN](#)

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China: Flood death toll rises above 130



21 August - The death toll from devastating floods at opposite ends of China following torrential rains and the aftermath of a typhoon has risen to more than 130, the government and media said Tuesday. Flooding in the northeast, which has been described as the worst there in decades, has killed 85 people and left 102 missing in recent days, the official Xinhua news agency reported. Another 49 people, meanwhile, have perished in Hunan, central China, and in the southern provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi, the ministry of civil affairs announced. The flooding has destroyed homes and sent rivers of mud flowing into city streets. [Channel News Asia](#)

China to launch fresh pharmaceutical bribery probe

14 August - China is intensifying its investigation into rampant bribery in the pharmaceutical and medical services sector with a fresh three-month probe slated to begin on Thursday,

the official Xinhua news agency reported. The investigation by the State Administration for Industry and Commerce (SAIC), a regulator in charge of market supervision, is aimed at stamping out bribery, fraud and other anti-competitive practices in various sectors, Xinhua said... Much of the focus has been on the pricing of items from medicine to milk powder and whether companies are violating a 2008 anti-monopoly law. [Reuters](#)

China: Wuhai City coal complex shows costs of China's energy demands



15 August - ... China's massive coal industry is not only polluting the air and water, but also fundamentally altering the surrounding landscape and communities. By 2020, coal consumption in China is projected to increase by 30 percent, and already, 20 percent of water withdrawn in the country goes to coal mining, processing, and cooling of coal-fired power plants... [O]ne of the major problems in Wuhai is the lack of implementation of clean coal technologies. Although the technology to reduce harmful emissions is available and often in-place, companies do not turn the necessary machinery on in order to cut costs. [New Security Beat](#)

Dengue fever sweeps Southeast Asia

16 August - Southeast Asia is scrambling to combat a deadly outbreak of dengue fever, the tropical illness transmitted by mosquitoes, which has hit parts of the region especially hard... [D]engue is thought to be mutating as a result of immunity that has built up in the region. And as the virus is spread by travelers, more countries are expected to be affected. The story in Southeast Asia is varied. Thailand, Laos and Singapore have seen sharp increases in infections compared with last year. Meanwhile, the Philippines, which has the largest number of deaths, at 306 so far, nevertheless has made some inroads as bringing numbers down from the 499 deaths in the year-earlier period, which health officials there attribute to education campaigns and antimosquito spraying. The rise in death tolls in Thailand and neighboring Laos is of concern to health experts. Already 94 have died in Thailand, tripling the 32 who died there in the first seven months of last year. Meanwhile, in Laos, 76 have died, up from only three reported in the first six months of last year. [Wall Street Journal](#)

India: Alarming 80% rise in dengue cases this year

21 August - Dengue cases have risen alarmingly across the country this year, with data showing an 80% rise in the disease till July 31 as compared to the same period last year. India has recorded 15,983 dengue cases so far in 2013 as compared to 8,899 cases in the corresponding months last year, latest health ministry data shows. But the good news is, while the cases have risen sharply, fatalities have actually declined - 56 as compared to 76 last year. Kerala reported most dengue cases at 5,801, followed by Karnataka (3,775), Tamil Nadu (3079) and Maharashtra (961) till end-July . Delhi witnessed a sharp rise in cases over the last few weeks, with the total this year touching 54. [Times of India](#)

Indonesia volcano erupts in Palue, killing six

11 August - Thousands of Indonesians are still waiting to find out when it will be safe for them to return home. They were evacuated after a volcanic eruption on the tiny eastern island of Palue over the weekend. Six people who died after they were covered in volcanic ash as they slept on a beach have now been buried. [BBC News](#)

Japan: Wrecked Fukushima plant springs highly radioactive water leak

20 August - Contaminated water with dangerously high levels of radiation is leaking from a storage tank at Japan's crippled Fukushima nuclear plant, the most serious setback to the clean up of the worst nuclear accident since Chernobyl. The storage tank breach of about 300 tons of water is separate from contaminated water leaks reported in recent weeks, plant operator Tokyo Electric Power Co said on Tuesday. The latest leak, which is continuing, is so contaminated that a person standing 50 centimeters (1.6 feet) away would, within an hour, receive a radiation dose five times the average annual global limit for nuclear workers.

[Reuters](#)

Philippines: 40 inches of rain deluges the Philippines



23 August - The combination of Tropical Storm Trami and the seasonal monsoon has unleashed over 30 inches (750 mm) of rain in parts of the Philippines since Sunday. Thankfully, the heaviest rain is beginning to move away, but rounds of thunderstorms can still occur through the rest of

the week. Through Wednesday, local time, rainfall totaled more than 42 inches in Sangley Point, Philippines, while the capital city of Manila has reported more than 30 inches of rain causing disastrous flooding. The heavy rainfall finally ended on Thursday, allowing flood waters to begin receding. At one point on Tuesday, 60 percent of Manila was flooded... As of Thursday evening, local time, the [National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council of the Philippines](#) reported at least 16 deaths from the recent unsettled weather. Also several people remain missing while more than 40 have been hospitalized with varying injuries. [AccuWeather.com](#)

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USSOUTHCOM

Dengue epidemic looms for Central American region

9 August - Central America is on track to have one of its worst years ever for the painful, sometimes fatal disease of dengue, prompting governments across the region to mobilize against the mosquito-borne virus. There have been 120,000 suspected cases of dengue

reported across Central America so far in the season, which is roughly June to November, when the rains make it optimal for mosquito breeding. The number of cases already is about to surpass the total for all of 2012 in the seven countries from Guatemala to Panama. At least 39 people have died so far, more than the 32 for all of 2012. [New York Times](#)

Encephalitis: 2010 outbreak in Panama raises concern

21 August - Although a few cases of eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) in humans are reported each year in North America, the infection has been extremely rare in Latin America until 2010. In a report published online August 21 in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, researchers report 13 human cases of confirmed EEE, 11 cases of Venezuelan equine encephalitis (VEE), and 1 case of dual infection in the Darién province of Panama between May and August 2010... "Until the Darién outbreak, we had become convinced that the virus in South America was fundamentally different in its ability to infect people and cause serious disease," said University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston professor Scott Weaver, PhD, senior author of the article, in a university news release. "This epidemic broke that dogma's back very quickly." [Medscape](#)

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