

24 August 2012

# Army Public Health Weekly Update

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U.S. Army Public Health Command



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## DoD Influenza Vaccination Policies

All of the Seasonal influenza Service messages & policies have been released are available on the MILVAX website. A copy of the Army seasonal influenza vaccination program ALARACT and implementation guidelines is also available on the MILVAX website.



## Seasonal Influenza Vaccine Curriculum

The **2012-13 Seasonal Influenza Vaccine Curriculum** is a five-module online course that provides healthcare personnel with comprehensive information concerning the influenza vaccine. The course prepares healthcare personnel to administer influenza vaccinations and perform required administrative tasks in support of the DoD's Influenza Vaccination Program.



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## Twenty-first Interim Report of the Committee on Acute Exposure Guideline Levels

Extremely hazardous substances (EHSs) can be released accidentally as a result of chemical spills, industrial explosions, fire, or accidents involving railroad cars or trucks transporting EHSs, or they can be released intentionally through terrorist activities. These substances can also be released by improper storage or handling.

The National Advisory Committee developed Acute Exposure Guideline Levels for approximately 270 EHSs.



## U.S. MILITARY

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### DoD, VA gather to study airborne health hazards

22 August - At least 1,000 veterans have fallen ill with mysterious symptoms they say were caused by poisonous pollutants from open-air burn pits, fires and clean-up operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Now, the Defense and Veterans Affairs departments are hoping to widen their understanding of war-zone toxins and ultimately help suffering troops. The departments this week are holding closed-door meetings in Washington to discuss and debate deployment-related airborne pollution. Organizers hope the Joint VA-DoD Airborne Hazards Symposium will "inform current practices and improve future efforts in environmental exposure assessment, clinical surveillance, medical testing and research, ultimately improving the health of veterans and service members," according to the symposium agenda. Among the topics under scrutiny is whether troops should receive baseline tests of how well their lungs work before and after deployment, as some researchers have recommended. [Army Times](#)

### Ectopic pregnancy, active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2002-2011

July 2012 - Ectopic pregnancy (EP) is a rare adverse outcome in which a fertilized egg implants and develops outside of the uterus. Life-threatening cases of EP among deployed U.S. service members have been described. During 2002- 2011, among active component females younger than 49, 1,245 EPs were diagnosed and treated as indicated by diagnostic and procedure codes recorded in electronic medical records. Annual numbers of EPs ranged from 91 to 151. During the period EP affected 0.64 percent of all pregnancies, with higher proportions among servicewomen in their 30s and of black, non-Hispanic race/ ethnicity. As compared with civilians, service members had the same percentage of pregnancies that were ectopic but had lower proportions of EPs that were treated medically (with methotrexate) rather than surgically. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

### Insomnia exacerbates PTSD, research shows

20 August - To treat troops suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, doctors must first treat the sleep disorders that often accompany PTSD, researchers say. Sleep problems afflict roughly 90 percent of returning veterans, said Col. Carl Castro, director of Military Operational Medicine Research Program at Fort Detrick, Md. While not everyone with a sleep problem has PTSD, sleep problems are one of PTSD's most common and most treatable symptoms. Left untreated, a sleep problem can lead to depression and addictive disorders and complicate a PTSD patient's recovery, said Anne Germain, a sleep researcher at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center whose work is funded by the Army. Insomnia is the most important factor influencing speed and accuracy in cognitive motor function, according to Army-funded research announced Aug. 15. [Army Times Prime](#) **LOOK FOR**

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## 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.

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## GLOBAL

### Close contact with young people at risk of suicide has no effect

22 August - Researchers, doctors and patients tend to agree that during the high-risk period after an attempted suicide, the treatment of choice is close contact, follow-up and personal interaction in order to prevent a tragic repeat. Now, however, new research shows that this strategy does not work... Researchers from Mental Health Services in the Capital Region of Denmark and the University of Copenhagen have just concluded a large study on the effect of an assertive outreach and intervention programme for young people after an attempted suicide. The surprising conclusion is that increased attention and support for the patient do not have a significant effect. [EurekAlert!](#)

### Have vaccines, will travel

20 August - Good health is a key ingredient to making the most of globe-trotting adventures and vaccinations can play a role in avoiding getting sick while traveling abroad. Most people are familiar with the standard vaccinations needed to protect people from illnesses like measles, mumps and rubella, but additional vaccinations may be recommended for specific destinations. The Centers for Disease Control recommends visiting a doctor four to six weeks prior to travel to receive any necessary vaccinations. The CDC divides travel vaccinations into those that are routine, recommended and required. Routine vaccinations are those recommended as standard for children and adults regardless of travel status. Recommended vaccinations are intended to protect travelers from illness present in other parts of the world and to prevent the spread of infectious diseases across international borders. Specific vaccinations recommended vary depending on the age and health status of the traveler, as well as where they will be traveling to, the season of travel and whether or not they will be visiting rural areas. More information can be found at the CDC's [destinations page](#), which includes a breakdown of recommended vaccines by location. [MHS](#)

### Infections among homeless could fuel wider epidemics: study



19 August - Homeless people across the world have dramatically higher rates of infection with tuberculosis (TB), HIV and hepatitis C and could fuel community epidemics that cost governments dear, a study showed on Monday. With an estimated 650,000 homeless people in the United States and around 380,000 in Britain, experts said high levels of infection would not only cause yet more poverty and distress for those without homes, but could also become a wider problem. "Infections in homeless people can lead to community infections and are associated with malnutrition, long periods of homelessness and high use of medical

services," said Seena Fazel, a senior research fellow in clinical science at the University of Oxford who led the study. Fazel and his team analyzed more than 40 research papers on levels of HIV, hepatitis C and TB among homeless people from 1984 to 2012. [Medline Plus](#)

## New tool screens antimalarials for resistance

22 August - Researchers at the Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV), a public-private nonprofit group in Geneva, today released a framework that it will use to assess malaria drugs in development for the risk of resistance. The group published its findings in an early online edition of *Malaria Journal*. The system is a test cascade of six steps based on three experimental procedures that allows investigators to classify the compound resistance risk profiles as low, elevated, or major, according to the report. The major rating signifies that the compound faces preexisting resistance or is likely to select new clinically significant resistance mechanisms, and in the absence of mitigating factors the major classification would bar further development. Tim Wells, MMV's chief scientific officer, said in a press release that profiling MMV's drug development portfolio as early as possible will help ensure that none will face resistance. "This will also help us cost-effectively accelerate the drug development process and be prepared in advance with a full resistance profile, which is required by regulatory authorities before a new drug can be approved, he added. Resistance to antimalaria drugs is a major concern among global health officials in light of reports from Cambodia of resistance to artemisinin, a key component in the battle against malaria. [CIDRAP News Scan](#)

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## INFLUENZA

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### CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 32 (week ending 11 August 2012), From July 12 through August 16, 2012, a total of 224 infections with influenza A (H3N2) variant (H3N2v) viruses have been reported in eight states (Hawaii [1], Illinois [3], Indiana [138], Michigan [1], Ohio [72], Pennsylvania [4], West Virginia [3], and Wisconsin [2]). So far during the current outbreaks, eight confirmed cases have been hospitalized as a result of their illness; no deaths have occurred. At this time no ongoing human-to-human transmission has been identified. Public health and agriculture officials are investigating the extent of disease among humans and swine, and additional cases are likely to be identified as the investigation continues. Because of reporting deadlines, the state totals reported by CDC may not always be consistent with those reported by state health departments. If there is a discrepancy between these two counts, data from the state health departments should be used as the most accurate number. [FluView](#)

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

During weeks 31-32 (30 July-12 August 2012), all reporting countries experienced low-intensity influenza activity and decreasing or stable trends. [Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

## Google.org: Flu Trends

23 August – Estimates of flu activity based on flu-related Internet search queries indicate that the level of flu activity in the United States ranges from minimal to low. [Google.org Flu Trends](#)

## Interim guidance for enhanced influenza surveillance: Additional specimen collection for detection of influenza A (H3N2) variant virus infections

20 August - In light of the increasing numbers of cases of H3N2 variant virus (H3N2v) and increasing numbers of states reporting H3N2v cases, states should consider expanding surveillance to include rRT-PCR testing of specimens from ILINet providers statewide, and of specimens collected from people with unusual or severe presentations of ILI. States should also consider collection of specimens from outbreaks of ILI among children in child-care and school settings, since these settings have been associated with person-to-person H3N2v virus transmission in 2011. CDC will continue to evaluate new information as it becomes available and will update this guidance as needed. [CDC](#)

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

For the week ending 18 August 2012:

### Adenovirus

- Vaccination against types 4 and 7 adenovirus was instituted at all basic training centers by mid-November 2011 (week 45).
- FRI rates and the proportion of FRI cases positive for adenovirus have decreased markedly since vaccine was reintroduced.
- A MSMR paper on the initial impact of adenovirus vaccine resumption was recently published.

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](#)

## U.S.: 2012-2013 influenza season vaccine

21 August - ... U.S. influenza vaccines for 2012-13 will contain: A/California/7/2009 (H1N1)-like, A/Victoria/361/2011 (H3N2)-like, and B/Wisconsin/1/2010-like (Yamagata lineage) antigens. The influenza A(H3N2) and B antigens differ from the respective 2010-11 and 2011-12 seasonal vaccine antigens (3). The influenza A(H1N1) vaccine virus strain is derived from an influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 (2009[H1N1]) virus and was included in the 2009(H1N1) monovalent pandemic vaccine as well as the 2010-11 and 2011-12 seasonal vaccines.

[ProMED-mail](#)

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### VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

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## U.S.: Multistate outbreak of *Salmonella* Typhimurium infections linked to cantaloupe

23 August - A total of 178 individuals infected with the outbreak strain of *Salmonella* Typhimurium have been reported from 21 states. The 37 new cases are from 13 states: Alabama (6), Georgia (2), Illinois (4), Indiana (5), Kentucky (6), Massachusetts (2), Minnesota (1), Mississippi (3), Missouri (3), New Jersey (1), Ohio (1), Texas (1), and Wisconsin (2). Since the last update cases have been reported from one additional state, Massachusetts. Among 121 persons for whom information is available, illness onset dates range from July 7, 2012 to August 9, 2012. Ill persons range in age from less than 1 year to 100 years, with a median age of 48 years. Fifty-nine percent of ill persons are female. Among 121 persons with available information, 62 (51%) reported being hospitalized. Two deaths have been reported in Kentucky. Illnesses that occurred after July 31, 2012 might not yet be reported due to the time it takes between when a person becomes ill and when the illness is reported. [CDC](#)

## USDA eyes whether tainted beef entered food supply

21 August - Federal regulators who shut down a Central California slaughterhouse after receiving an animal welfare video were investigating Tuesday whether beef from sick cows reached the human food supply. The video appears to show workers bungling the slaughter of cows struggling to walk and even stand. Under federal regulations, sick animals cannot be slaughtered for human consumption. The investigation will determine whether sick cows were slaughtered and whether meat products from the company should be recalled, a spokesman for the USDA Food Safety Inspection Service said. The agency suspended operations Monday at Central Valley Meat Co. in Hanford after receiving the video Friday from the animal welfare group Compassion Over Killing. [NPR](#)

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## WELLNESS

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### A childhood need for immediate gratification predicts adult obesity



17 August - In what has become known as "the marshmallow test" of delayed gratification, researchers in the 1960s developed a novel way to measure self-control among children. Having recruited preschoolers from a university daycare, scientists presented each

child with one marshmallow. They were then told they could either eat the one they had or wait an unspecified amount of time and be rewarded with an additional marshmallow... Researchers sent surveys to 306 participants in the original gratification study in two follow-up mailings... Women generally reported a lower BMI than men, but how long the children were able to hold off gratification had an even stronger link to weight than did sex. For every minute that a child postponed gratification, the researchers noticed a 0.2-point decrease in BMI among the grown participants. [Atlantic](#)

### Coming next: Using an app as prescribed

19 August - Before long, your doctor may be telling you to download two apps and call her in the morning. Smartphone apps already fill the roles of television remotes, bike speedometers and flashlights. Soon they may also act as medical devices, helping patients monitor their heart rate or manage their diabetes, and be paid for by insurance. The idea of medically prescribed apps excites some people in the health care industry, who see them as a starting point for even more sophisticated applications that might otherwise never be built. But first, a range of issues — around vetting, paying for and monitoring the proper use of such apps — needs to be worked out. [New York Times](#)

### Decline in circumcisions could prove costly

21 August - Fewer boys are being circumcised these days, and that could add to health costs down the road. Over the past two decades, circumcision rates in the U.S. have fallen to 55 percent from a peak of about 79 percent. Insurance coverage for the procedure has also fallen — particularly under Medicaid — and is a factor in the decline. Yet three separate studies have found that circumcision reduces the risks of infection with HIV, leading the World Health Organization to recommend it in places where HIV risk runs high. Kenya, for one, is turning to circumcision of adult men to curb the spread of the virus there. Circumcision also reduces the risk of infection with genital herpes virus and human papillomavirus. The practice can also reduce urinary tract infections in young boys. Later on, men's female sex partners are less likely to develop some infections if the guys are circumcised. [NPR](#)

## Father's age seen as crucial to baby's disease risk



22 August - A father's age, not a mother's, when a baby is conceived is the single largest factor in the risk of passing on new gene mutations to children and may help explain why childhood autism rates are rising, scientists said on Wednesday. In a study which turns conventional thinking on its head, researchers sequenced the genomes of 78 Icelandic families with children diagnosed with autism or schizophrenia and found a father's age was crucial to the genetic risk of such disorders. "Conventional wisdom has been to blame developmental disorders of children on the age of mothers," said Kari Stefansson, chief executive of the private firm deCODE Genetics in Reykjavik, whose work was published in the journal Nature. "(But) our results all point to the possibility that as a man ages, the number of hereditary mutations in his sperm increases." [Medline Plus](#)

## Gut bacteria increase pre-diabetes risk

16 August - Certain bacteria in the human gut seem to be associated with pre-diabetes, a condition marked by a constellation of risk factors that often precedes the on-set of full-blown type 2 diabetes in humans. The finding is part of an effort to discover the role of trillions of bacteria or microbiota that live in our bodies. According to Brandi Cantarel, the number of bacteria living happily inside us outnumbers human cells by an astounding 10-1. Cantarel is a researcher at the Institute for Genome Science at the University of Maryland School of Medicine in Baltimore. "With all that extra stuff, let's say genetic material in our bodies that doesn't come from us, it comes from other sources, we think it has to be doing something," said Cantarel. "Right?" According to Cantarel, scientists believe there are over 7,000 strains of more than 1,000 different species of bacteria that live in the digestive tract, most of them in the gut or small intestine, which play a role in human health. Many of the trillions of microbes are helpful; without them, for example, we couldn't digest food properly. But experts say bacteria that are out of balance could be harmful. Researchers have identified 26 microbes that researchers say may be negatively associated with pre-diabetes or metabolic syndrome. [VOA](#)

## How well you sleep may hinge on race

20 August - ... The idea that race or ethnicity might help determine how well people sleep is relatively new among sleep researchers. But in the few short years that epidemiologists, demographers and [psychologists](#) have been studying the link, they have repeatedly come to the same conclusion: In the United States, at least, sleep is not colorblind. Non-Hispanic whites get more and better-quality sleep than people of other races, studies repeatedly show. Blacks are the most likely to get shorter, more restless sleep. What researchers don't yet know is why. [New York Times](#)

## Scientists ID cancer-causing agent in smokeless tobacco

22 August - Scientists have linked a specific ingredient in smokeless tobacco products to an increased risk for oral cancer, in research using rodents. The culprit, found in such products as chewing tobacco and snuff, is a nitrosamine compound called (S)-NNN. Nitrosamines in tobacco are considered to be cancer-causing, according to the U.S. National Cancer Institute. Authors of the new study acknowledge that such compounds are found in many foods, including beer and bacon. But they say that levels are much higher in smokeless tobacco products, leading them to suggest that the U.S. government should therefore ban or regulate (S)-NNN. The researchers are scheduled to present their findings Wednesday at the American Chemical Society annual meeting, in Philadelphia. [Medline Plus](#)

## Tap water use in neti pot tied to rare, fatal brain infection

23 August - Two people in Louisiana died last year from a rare brain infection contracted after using neti pots containing tap water to flush their sinuses. The infection, known as primary amebic meningoencephalitis, occurs after water containing the amoeba *Naegleria fowleri* enters the nose and travels through the olfactory nerve into the brain. This is the first time tap water and neti pots have been connected to infection with *N. fowleri*, according to a report appearing online Aug. 23 in *Clinical Infectious Diseases*. [Health Day](#)

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### USAFRICOM

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## Angola: Health sector to vaccinate over 5000 children against measles

22 August - Some 5.271 children, aged from six months to 15 years, will be vaccinated against measles vaccine in the central Kwanza Sul province. This is part of the campaign happening on 17-23 August, aimed at fighting against the referred disease. Speaking to Angop on Wednesday, the head of the local public health for pandemic diseases control, Maria Lussinga said that the campaign is happening without any constraints and the parents are cooperating in taking their children to posts stationed for the vaccination of the minors. According to her, the campaign is happening due to cases of the disease recorded in the districts of Wako Kungo and Seles, thus, encouraging the local health authorities to promote this kind of action so as to prevent the expansion of the disease in these localities.

[All Africa](#)

## Democratic Republic of Congo: Ebola, WHO update

21 August - As of 20 August 2012, a total of 15 (13 probable and 2 confirmed) cases with 10 deaths have been reported in Province Orientale in Eastern DRC. The reported cases and deaths have occurred in 3 health zones as follows: 12 cases and 8 deaths in Isiro, including three (3) health care workers who have died; 2 cases and 1 death in Pawa; and 1 fatal case in Dungu. The Congolese Ministry of Health has convened a National Task Force and is

working with several partners including WHO, UNICEF, Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) Suisse, MSF Belgique and the United States Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Similar Task Forces have been established at provincial and district levels to oversee and guide the response. A joint MoH, WHO and MSF emergency response team is in the field to conduct a detailed epidemiological investigation and support case management. Control activities that are being carried out include active case finding and contact tracing, enhanced surveillance, case management, public information and social mobilization, and reinforcing infection control practices...WHO does not recommend that any travel or trade restrictions be applied to Democratic Republic of Congo. [WHO](#)

## Sierra Leone cholera death toll rises to 217

23 August - Humanitarian officials say the death toll from a cholera outbreak in Sierra Leone has risen to 217 people. Oxfam said Thursday that the death rates in the West African country are almost double emergency thresholds. Nearly 12,000 cases already have been reported and Oxfam said the number of people affected is "likely to increase significantly in the next month." Aid groups say there has been a spike in reported cholera cases since mid-July and the onset of the rainy season. Some 82 deaths have been reported in neighboring Guinea, while other cases have been seen in Mali and Niger. [CBS News](#)

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### USCENTCOM

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## Afghanistan: Study shows malaria is over-diagnosed

17 August - ... [R]esearchers from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and Afghanistan-based research organizations looked at 22 primary care clinics in two Afghan provinces to see what proportion of patients suspected of having malaria were accurately treated. They compared diagnoses and treatment outlined in 2357 patients' records to blood samples and found that many of the patients had tested negative for the parasite, yet were still being treated. The problem with this, the researchers said, is that serious non-malarial illnesses go untreated, malaria drugs are wasted, and the cost effectiveness of the malaria diagnostic tests is reduced... According to the study, of 415 patients diagnosed with malaria based on symptoms, 412 were actually negative, and had been given malaria medication anyway. Only one percent was diagnosed and treated accurately (meaning the patients had malaria and were treated for malaria). In contrast, in that same clinic, a second group was diagnosed using microscopy. From this group, 63 percent (127/202) was diagnosed and treated accurately. An improvement, but that still means that 37 percent of that population received malaria medication without being infected. [Health Map](#)

## Syria: Number of displaced people grows as violence continues, says UN agency

17 August - The humanitarian crisis generated by the ongoing Syrian conflict is rapidly growing as refugees from the Middle Eastern country continue to flee the ongoing violence and spill over into neighbouring areas, the United Nations refugee agency said today. According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the amount of registered refugees seeking sanctuary in Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan and Iraq has grown by over 12,000 – increasing from 157,577 to 170,116 in just the past three days... Meanwhile, the World Health Organization (WHO) today warned that a lack of access to medical facilities, compounded with severe staffing shortages in hospitals, was further aggravating the Syrian health care system. Speaking at a press briefing in Geneva, WHO's Director of the Department of Emergency Risk Management and Humanitarian Response, Dr. Richard Brennan, said that the UN health agency would continue to support four mobile clinics, serving approximately 90,000 people in the governorates of Rural Damascus and Homs. [UN News Centre](#)

## Yemen: Time running out for solution to water crisis

13 August - ... Water and sanitation are chronic problems in Yemen, where, on average, each Yemeni only has access to about 140cu.m. of water per year for all uses. (The Middle East average is about 1,000cu.m. per person per year.) In recent years, the government of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh had taken strides to improve water access in Yemen, but the political turbulence that arose from last year's uprising has pushed water down the new government's list of priorities, according to aid workers and a government employee. [IRIN](#)

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### USEUCOM

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## France: A cluster of meningococcal disease caused by rifampicin-resistant C meningococci, April 2012

23 August - In April 2012, a cluster of two cases of meningococcal disease caused by rifampicin-resistant C meningococci was reported in the Champagne-Ardenne region, France. The two cases occurred in a student population living in the same town but studying at different schools. Bacteriological and epidemiological investigations of cases have shown that the isolates of both cases were non-differentiable. [Eurosurveillance](#)

## Germany: Cancer survival after the fall of the Iron Curtain

23 August - Data from the 1970s and 1980s show that people affected by cancer survived significantly longer in West Germany than cancer patients behind the Iron Curtain. Looking at a diagnosis period from 1984 to 1985 in the former German Democratic Republic, 28

percent of colorectal cancer patients, 46 percent of prostate cancer patients, and 52 percent of breast cancer patients survived the first five years after diagnosis. By contrast, 5-year survival rates for people in West Germany affected by these types of cancer were 44 percent, 68 percent, and 68 percent in the years from 1979 to 1983 already. [EurekAlert!](#)

## Greece's latest crisis: Rising HIV cases



27 July - One of the alarming consequences of the financial crisis in Greece appears to be a sharp rise in the rate of HIV infection. The country, which is struggling through a historic debt crisis and a deep recession, still has one of the lowest HIV infection rates in Europe. But budget cuts to health and social services seem to be driving a recent and dramatic increase, especially among injecting drug users. About 20 recovering drug users gather daily at the Off Club, an outpatient community center in central Athens. On a recent day, one is making lunch wearing a surgical mask and gloves. "We assume that everyone here either has AIDS or hepatitis C, so we have to be careful," says center director Panagiotis Saivanides. [NPR](#)

## Spain: Firefighters tackle wildfire blaze

20 August - Firefighters in Spain tackle a forest fire overnight in Torneros de Jamuz near León. With hot and dry conditions, Spain is having its worst wildfires in a decade. More than 50,000 hectares of land have been destroyed in the first five months of 2012. Although firefighters managed to contain the blaze, officials say the fire is still active. [Guardian](#)

## United Kingdom: Drug user's anthrax infection death

17 August - A drug user has died after being infected with anthrax, health experts have said. The Health Protection Agency said that a person who injected drugs died in hospital in Blackpool. The news comes after a spate of cases in Europe since early June. The HPA said the source of the infection is presumed to be contaminated heroin. The HPA said it is "unclear" whether the case in Blackpool and another case in Scotland - which was confirmed at the end of July - are linked to the European outbreak... Since June there have been seven confirmed cases of the infection - one in Scotland, three in Germany, two in Denmark, and one in France. [The Press Association](#)

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**USNORTHCOM**

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## U.S.: Chickenpox down 80 percent since 2000

20 August - Signaling the retreat of a childhood rite of passage, the incidence of [chickenpox](#) in the United States fell by 80 percent from 2000 to 2010, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [reported last week](#). The decline results from widespread use of the chickenpox vaccine, researchers said. From 2000 to 2005, a period when a single dose of vaccine was recommended for children 12 to 18 months old and for older unvaccinated

children, cases fell by 43 percent. The decline steepened once a second dose was recommended in 2006, with incidence falling 72 percent in the second half of the decade. Chickenpox cases decreased most in children ages 1 through 9, who were most likely to get the vaccine, according to the C.D.C. After 2006, chickenpox decreased especially prominently in children ages 5 through 9, the group most likely to have gotten a second dose during that period. The C.D.C. **previously reported** significant decreases in chickenpox from 1995 to 2000, with incidence falling by 70 to 85 percent in three communities selected for surveillance. [New York Times](#)

## U.S.: Huge fire burns to edge of 3 small Calif. towns



20 August - Aided by a shift in wind direction, firefighters made a stand against a huge lightning-sparked wildfire burning on the edge of three small Northern California towns. The blaze, which grew to more than 25 square miles late Monday continued to threaten thousands of homes, as fearful residents sought safety miles away at an emergency shelter. "All we can do is pray," evacuee Jerry Nottingham told reporters. Still, with more firefighters arriving on the scene and shifting winds helping to keep the blaze away from homes, officials said fire crews were able to improve their lines around the wildfire. "We definitely made some good progress today building around this fire," state fire spokesman Daniel Berlant said late Monday. The fast-moving Ponderosa Fire was one of many burning across the West, where lightning, dry temperatures and gusting winds have brought an early start to fire season. [ABC News](#)

## U.S.: Nearly half of U.S. doctors struggle with burnout: study

21 August - Job burnout strikes doctors more often than it does other employed people in the United States, according to a national survey that included more than 7,000 doctors. More than four in 10 U.S. physicians said they were emotionally exhausted or felt a high degree of cynicism, or "depersonalization," toward their patients, said researchers whose findings appeared in the Archives of Internal Medicine. "The high rate of burnout has consequences not only for the individual physicians, but also for the patients they are caring for," said Tait Shanafelt of the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, who led the research. Previous studies have shown that burned-out doctors are more prone to thinking about suicide and to making medical errors than their peers, Shanafelt added. [Reuters](#)

## U.S.: Tattoo ink linked to serious skin infections

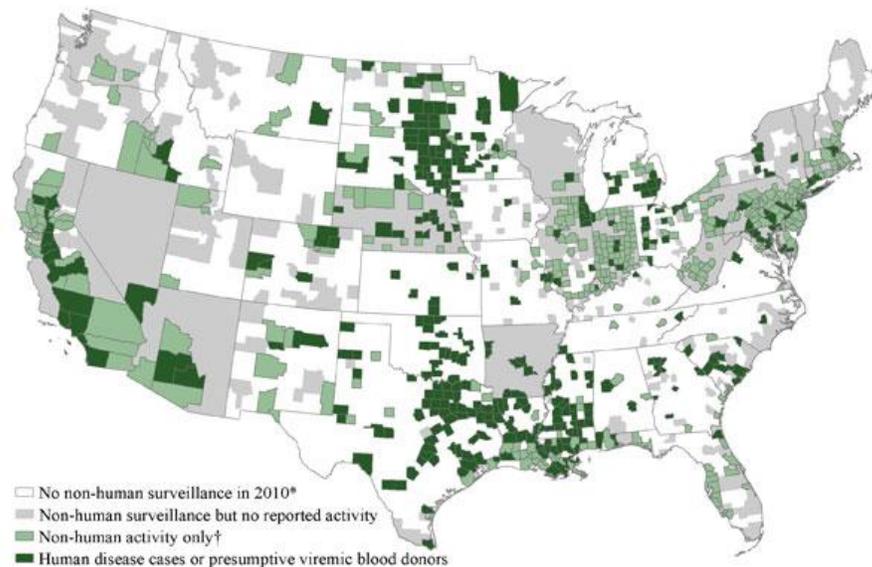
23 August - If you're going to take a walk on the wild side and get a tattoo, it could get even wilder than you planned. Federal and state health investigators have identified five clusters of skin infections linked to tattoos. Now it's true that infection risks from tattoos are not **exactly new or unknown**. In fact, tattoo parlors are licensed and regulated in many jurisdictions to minimize the risk of trouble for people getting "inked." But those precautions would have been of no help to at least 14 people infected during tattooing in New York last year. Investigators figured out the source of the germs was the ink itself. And that may be just the tip of the tattoo needle. [NPR](#)

## U.S.: Tropical diseases - the new plague of poverty



18 August – In the United States, 2.8 million children are living in households with incomes of less than \$2 per person per day, a benchmark more often applied to developing countries. An additional 20 million Americans live in extreme poverty... Poverty takes many tolls, but in the United States, one of the most tragic has been its tight link with a group of infections known as the neglected tropical diseases, which we ordinarily think of as confined to developing countries. Outbreaks of dengue fever, a mosquito-transmitted viral infection that is endemic to Mexico and Central America, have been reported in South Texas. Then there is cysticercosis, a parasitic infection caused by a larval pork tapeworm that leads to seizures and epilepsy; toxocariasis, another parasitic infection that causes asthma and neurological problems; cutaneous leishmaniasis, a disfiguring skin infection transmitted by sand flies; and murine typhus, a bacterial infection transmitted by fleas and often linked to rodent infestations. Among the more frightening is Chagas disease. Transmitted by a “kissing bug” that resembles a cockroach but with the ability to feed on human blood, it is a leading cause of heart failure and sudden death throughout Latin America. It is an especially virulent scourge among pregnant women, who can pass the disease on to their babies. [New York Times](#)

## U.S.: West Nile virus (WNV) activity reported to ArboNET, by county, United States, 2012 (as of August 21, 2012)



CDC

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## India: Chikungunya, suspected

23 August - Chikungunya [virus infection] is suspected to have resurfaced in Ganjam district with several persons in Boxipalli village reporting its clinical symptoms. It can only be confirmed after laboratory tests, doctors said on Tuesday [21 Aug 2012] after visiting Boxipalli. "A team of doctors led by district malaria officer (DMO) Uma Shankar Mishra along with the paramedics visited Boxipalli on Monday [20 Aug 2012] and collected the blood samples," official sources said. The blood samples of 5 persons were sent to MKCG Medical College and Hospital. These samples will also be tested for malaria. An outbreak of chikungunya in Boxipalli, a predominantly fishing village, was reported 2 days ago [19 Aug 2012], when a number of people were suffering from fever with joint pain. Doctors said during their visit they did not find any fever cases but people with joint pain. Fishermen had reported similar symptoms in May [2012] but the blood samples tested negative for chikungunya [virus infections]. However, 9 chikungunya cases were reported in Golabandh, another fishermen dominated village, in April [2012]. "Out of 22 blood samples from Golabandh, 9 tested positive," a senior doctor said. [ProMED-mail](#)

## Indonesia: Growing concern over hepatitis

17 August - Poor awareness about hepatitis infections and a lack of treatment have made the disease a growing public health threat in Indonesia, say experts. An estimated 25 million Indonesians have either had hepatitis B or C, but only about 20 percent of them know, said Rino Gani, the chairman of the Indonesian Liver Research Association. Hepatitis is a viral infection with latent symptoms that can take decades to discover while it damages the liver. Impaired liver function makes it hard for the body to excrete waste or for blood to clot properly, which can be fatal in an accident or a complication from surgery. [IRIN](#)

## New immune-deficiency illness emerging in East Asia

22 August - Investigators say they've identified an emerging immune-deficiency syndrome that is killing or sickening people in East Asia. Although human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is not linked to the illness, the illnesses appear similar to what people with HIV often get, say the team from the U.S. National Institutes of Health. The new syndrome, which does not seem to pass from person to person, involves an immune-system antibody that blocks a molecule critical to fighting off infections and auto-immune diseases. The antibody works against a common protective molecule called interferon-gamma (IFN-gamma), triggering immunodeficiency in some adults, the research team said. People with the syndrome seem especially susceptible to infections caused by what are called opportunistic microbes, which can lie dormant in the body for years but are activated and multiply when the body's immune system is weakened. They're more likely to get diseases such as nontuberculous mycobacteria (NTM), a rare cousin to tuberculosis that can cause severe lung disease.

[Medline Plus](#)

## Taiwan: CDC reports six new cases of severe enterovirus

14 August - The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported six new cases of severe enterovirus in Taiwan on Tuesday, urging parents and caretakers to pay attention to symptoms that may indicate an infection. The patients, children between one month and 10 years old, were all treated and discharged from hospital, said CDC Deputy Director-General Chou Jih-haw at a routine press briefing. Five of the children are from northern Taiwan and one -- an eight-month old girl -- is from an outlying island, he said. Statistics show that the enterovirus situation is more serious in the northern areas of the country, Chou said. [Taiwan Headlines](#)

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## Caribbean: Tropical Storm Isaac getting better organized

22 August - Leaders across much of the Caribbean closed schools and government offices on Wednesday and urged people to stay at home as Tropical Storm Isaac swept toward the region, threatening to soon become a hurricane and perhaps eventually to menace Florida. The storm was 140 miles east of the French Caribbean island of Guadeloupe late Wednesday morning, with maximum sustained winds of 45 mph. Isaac was moving west at 21 mph and was expected to become a hurricane by Thursday, according to the U.S. National Hurricane Center... The storm's center was expected to move over the Leeward Islands on Wednesday evening, and forecasters said it is expected to hit the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Cuba as a hurricane later in the week. Isaac also poses a possible threat to Florida during next week's Republican National Convention in Tampa. Tropical storm warnings are in effect for Puerto Rico, the U.S. and British Virgin Islands and a swath of islands across the Caribbean including Martinique, Dominica, Guadeloupe, St. Martin, St. Kitts, Nevis, Antigua, Barbuda, Montserrat, Anguilla, Saba, St. Eustatius, St. Maarten, Culebra and Vieques. A hurricane watch is in effect for Puerto Rico, Vieques, Culebra, the U.S. and British Virgin Islands and the south coast of the Dominican Republic. [USA Today](#)

## Dominican Republic: 300 hospitalized with suspected cholera



19 August - More than 300 people have been hospitalized in the Dominican Republic with suspected cholera symptoms over the past three days. The authorities have blamed this latest outbreak on the poor quality of drinking water. The country had a cholera epidemic last year. Fortunately, it was quickly curbed thanks to timely precautions, but the disease spilled across the border into neighboring Haiti where it claimed 7,000 lives. [Voice of Russia](#)

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