

28 June 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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Because of the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday, there will not be an Army Public Health Weekly update next Friday. Publication will resume on 12 July. Enjoy the holiday!



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## U.S. MILITARY

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### Army chaplain gets six months in sex case

24 June - ...At Fort Bliss, Tex., last week, Maj. Geoffrey Alleyne, a chaplain and 24-year Army veteran, was sentenced by a court-martial jury to six months in jail for repeatedly groping a

### FUDD Video

A video on the use of the Female Urinary Diversion Device that allows females to urinate discreetly while standing up is available on our [YouTube site](#).



### OPSS Pens are back!

Operation Supplement Safety pens are available again in the [Health Information Product eCatalog](#).



civilian employee at the West Texas base. Following the conviction and sentencing the victim in the case went public to charge that her long-standing complaints about Alleyne's attempts to fondle and kiss her were initially ignored by base officials and other chaplains... Earlier this month lawmakers from both parties in both houses of Congress offered bills that would have transferred a commander's authority to convene courts martial and refer charges in sexual assault cases to military prosecutors in the Judge Advocate Generals corps. The Senate Armed Services Committee voted against the bill filed by Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., while the House version, proposed by Rep. Tulsi Gabbard, D-Hawaii, was killed when the Rules Committee kept it from going to the House floor. [Military.com](#)

## DoD launches traumatic brain injury research tissue repository



17 June - The Defense Department has established a medical facility at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, Md. for researchers to analyze and study traumatic brain injuries. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel announced the Center for Neuroscience and Regenerative Medicine Brain Tissue Repository for Traumatic Brain Injury during a recent TBI symposium, the Defense Department said Thursday... [T]he center will aim to address clinical findings on TBI subjects, develop therapies to help patients heal and find ways to prevent the illnesses. [ExecutiveGov](#)

## Epilepsy in active component Service members, 1998-2012

May 2013 - ... From 2006 to 2010 rates of incident epilepsy cases increased 52 percent. The increase was demonstrated across all demographic groups (e.g., in both males and females and in all age categories). This increase may be attributable, at least in part, to increases in moderate and severe traumatic brain injuries (prior to and during the same period) which are a well-documented predisposing factor for the development of epilepsy. However, only 7.8 percent of all incident cases of epilepsy during the surveillance period had any documented diagnoses of traumatic brain injury prior to their first diagnosis of epilepsy... The extent to which the screening and evaluation of service members with possible head injuries and exposures to concussive blasts have become much more thorough and commonplace may have resulted in an increased frequency of diagnoses of epilepsy. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

## Senators to VA: Ramp up outreach on burn pit registry

21 June - The Senate Appropriations Committee is turning up the heat on the Veterans Affairs Department to establish a registry for troops exposed to potentially toxic fumes from open-air burn pits in Iraq and Afghanistan... The amendment would require VA to give Congress a report on its planned timeline and communications strategy for reaching veterans and informing its own personnel about the registry. The Airborne Hazards and

## 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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Open Burn Pit Registry is supposed to be available by January 2014. It is meant to track troops who served in areas where burn pits were used for waste disposal and notify participants of significant developments in treatment and research on environmental exposure-related diseases. [Army Times](#)

## Vietnam vets with PTSD more than twice as likely to have heart disease

25 June - Male twin Vietnam veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) were more than twice as likely as those without PTSD to develop heart disease during a 13-year period, according to a study supported by the National Institutes of Health. This is the first long-term study to measure the association between PTSD and heart disease using objective clinical diagnoses combined with cardiac imaging techniques... The incidence of heart disease was 22.6 percent in twins with PTSD (177 individuals) and 8.9 percent in those without PTSD (425 individuals). Heart disease was defined as having a heart attack, having an overnight hospitalization for heart-related symptoms, or having undergone a heart procedure. Nuclear scans, used to photograph blood flow to the heart, showed that individuals with PTSD had almost twice as many areas of reduced blood flow to the heart as individuals without PTSD. [EurekaAlert!](#)

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### GLOBAL

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## Bike sharing offers big fitness benefits for the little commute

24 June - With bike sharing plans rolling on asphalt from New York City to Budapest, experts say city streets are becoming as fitness-friendly as country trails. Even short cycling jaunts can make a difference in the health of city dwellers... In New York City, which kicked off a massive bike sharing program this spring, 56 percent of auto trips are under three miles, according to the New York City Department of Transportation website. [Reuters](#)

## Clues in the cycle of suicide

24 June - On average, about 700 Americans kill themselves each week — but in the fine-weather weeks of May and June, the toll rises closer to 800, sometimes higher. Every year, suicide peaks with the tulips and lilacs — increasing roughly 15 percent over the annual average to create one of psychiatry's most consistent epidemiological patterns... [There has been] a sharp increase in both absolute and per-capita rates since the recession that began in 2007, particularly among the middle-aged. More than 38,000 people committed suicide in the United States in 2010 — a 16.5 percent jump from the 32,600 suicides five years before, and a new high. The stakes involved in figuring out the dynamics of self-murder seem only to rise with time. [New York Times](#)

## Lead costs developing economies nearly \$1 trillion annually



26 June - Childhood lead exposure is costing developing countries \$992 billion annually due to reductions in IQs and earning potential, according to a new study published today. The report by New York University researchers is the first to calculate the economic cost of children exposed to lead in Africa, Asia, Latin America and other developing regions. The researchers found that, despite major declines in exposure in the United States and Europe, lead is still harming brains and bottom lines in poorer regions around the world. [Scientific American](#)

## Stroke risk increased after head trauma

26 June - The risk of ischemic stroke increased modestly but significantly following traumatic brain injury (TBI), according to a review of more than 400,000 cases. TBI was associated with a 31% greater risk of stroke compared with trauma patients whose injuries did not affect the brain... Although the absolute increase in risk was 0.2%, the higher prevalence of TBI in trauma patients translated into a bigger contribution to ischemic stroke than hypertension, the leading risk stroke risk factor. [MedPage Today](#)

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### INFLUENZA

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## ACIP recommends flu vaccine option for those with egg allergies

20 June – [The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), which advises the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] today voted in favor of recommending a newly approved recombinant flu vaccine for adults age 18 through 49 who have an egg allergy, regardless of severity. The group also recommended that people who have severe egg allergies consult with a doctor about their condition before vaccination if FluBlok isn't available. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the vaccine on Jan 16, clearing the way for the first flu vaccine that does not use the influenza virus or chicken eggs in its manufacturing process to be brought to the US market. [CIDRAP](#)

## Analysis: Flu may boost bacterial pneumonia 100-fold

26 June - Influenza infection can boost the likelihood of bacterial pneumonia 100-fold, according to a new study that teased out the interaction between the two diseases. Increases in pneumonia cases during flu epidemics have been documented over the last two centuries, but different types of studies have yielded inconsistent, puzzling findings

about the association between the two illnesses... A research team [used a] model to rank the likelihood of three hypotheses

- That people with pneumonia contribute more to transmission if they recently had flu
- That people with flu are more susceptible to pneumococcal pneumonia
- That flu boosts only the severity of subsequent pneumonia infections.

Results showed no evidence to support the transmission or severity hypotheses. However, the team found strong support for the susceptibility hypothesis—that the heightened risk for pneumonia lasted a week after flu infection. [CIDRAP](#)

## CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 24 (ending June 15, 2013), 6.5% of all deaths reported through the 122-Cities Mortality Reporting System were due to pneumonia or influenza. This percentage was below the epidemic threshold of 6.7% for week 24. [FluView](#)

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

Since week 21/2013 influenza activity has been low in Europe. In weeks 23-24/2013:

- All 17 reporting countries experienced low-intensity transmission. Stable trends were reported by almost all reporting countries.
- Five countries tested 41 sentinel specimens, none of which was positive for influenza virus.
- In addition, 23 non-sentinel source specimens were found to be positive for influenza virus, 16 of which were type A and seven type B.
- No laboratory-confirmed severe influenza cases have been reported since week 21/2013. [Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

## Google.org: Flu Trends

25 June – 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. In the southern hemisphere, flu activity ranges from minimal in Bolivia and Peru to high in Chile and South Africa. [Google.org Flu Trends](#)

## Influenza illness and hospitalizations averted by influenza vaccination in the United States, 2005–2011

19 June - ...We estimated that during our 6-year study period, the number of influenza illnesses averted by vaccination ranged from a low of approximately 1.1 million (95% confidence interval (CI) 0.6–1.7 million) during the 2006–2007 season to a high of 5 million (CI 2.9–8.6 million) during the 2010–2011 season while the number of averted hospitalizations ranged from a low of 7,700 (CI 3,700–14,100) in 2009–2010 to a high of 40,400 (CI 20,800–73,000) in 2010–2011. Prevented fractions varied across age groups and

over time. The highest prevented fraction in the study period was observed in 2010–2011, reflecting the post-pandemic expansion of vaccination coverage. [PLOS One](#)

## Meta-analysis: Flu vaccines can protect against mismatched strains

26 June - A meta-analysis of 34 randomized clinical trials (RCTs) suggests that seasonal influenza vaccines can provide significant protection against flu even if the circulating flu strains don't match those in the vaccine, according to a Canadian team of researchers.

[CIDRAP News Scan](#)

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

For the week ending 22 June 2013:

- Influenza: No new 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

### H7N9 bird flu less deadly than H5N1: researchers

24 June - H7N9 avian influenza, which was first reported in humans in China this year, has a lower fatality risk than H5N1-type bird flu that emerged in 2003, researchers said on Monday. A study by researchers from the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention in Beijing and the University of Hong Kong found that the H7N9 proved fatal in 36 percent of hospitalized patients on the Chinese mainland. Writing in a paper in the online publication of the Lancet medical journal on Monday, the researchers estimated that the fatality risk for a symptomatic case of H7N9 flu could be 0.16 percent to 2.8 percent. That meant the influenza was much less deadly than the H5N1 that has killed 375 of the 630 infected people around the world in the past decade, according to the paper. [Xinhua](#)

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## VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

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### Counterfeit food more widespread than suspected

27 June - Invisible from the roadway, hidden deep in the lush English countryside, Moscow Farm is an unlikely base for an international organized crime gang churning out a

dangerous brew of fake vodka. But a quarter of a mile off a one-lane road here, tens of thousands of liters of counterfeit spirits were distilled, pumped into genuine vodka bottles, with near-perfect counterfeit labels and duty stamps, and sold in corner shops across Britain. The fake Glen's vodka looked real. But analysis revealed that it was spiked with bleach to lighten its color, and contained high levels of methanol, which in large doses can cause blindness. [New York Times](#)

## Deadly piglet virus spreads to nearly 200 U.S. farm sites

24 June - A swine virus deadly to young pigs, and never before seen in North America, has spiked to 199 sites in 13 states - nearly double the number of farms and other locations from earlier this month. Iowa, the largest U.S. hog producer, has the most sites testing positive for Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea Virus: 102 sites, as of June 10. The state raises on average 30 million hogs each year, according to the Iowa Pork Producers Association. PEDV, most often fatal to very young pigs, causes diarrhea, vomiting and dehydration. It also sickens older hogs, though their survival rate tends to be high. [Reuters](#)

## Four military working dogs honored for service to their country



25 June - They served a total of 32 years of faithful service to their country, and Tuesday, they retired. Four members of the Canine Security Forces were formally honored at a ceremony at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph. The MWDs – or Military Working Dogs -- were awarded certificates of meritorious service. Commander of the 902d Security Forces Squadron, Major Gregory Bodenstein, says all the dogs are war heroes... Their handlers called them their partners, working in the last ten years, searching out bombs in Iraq and Kuwait, searching for drugs in barracks, and protecting the president. [Texas Public Radio](#)

## Shanghai issues food safety 'blacklist'

25 June - To help stem the tide of food crimes, the Shanghai Food and Drug Administration last week published a list of companies and individuals who have been found to have violated food safety laws. "Enterprises that are blacklisted will receive administrative punishment at the highest level and their executives will be banned from operating food businesses, according to a blacklist mechanism that took effect in March," official Chinese media Xinhua recently reported. Xinhua credits Gu Zhenhua, who serves as the deputy director of the Shanghai FDA, with setting up what the paper is calling a "food safety credibility system." [Food Safety News](#)

## Thousands sought vaccines following Townsend Farms Hep A outbreak

24 June - Thousands of people in the western United States have received hepatitis A vaccines since news broke on May 31 of an outbreak linked to Townsend Farms frozen

berry mixes sold at Costco stores. More than 10,000 people have received the vaccine from Costco pharmacies alone, according to Craig Wilson, Costco's vice president of quality assurance and food safety. That number does not include the customers who have been vaccinated elsewhere and then brought in receipts to receive reimbursement from Costco, Wilson said. He was not sure of the number of reimbursements Costco had issued... The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health has told Food Safety News it has given out more than 900 vaccinations. [Food Safety News](#)

## U.S. to retire most chimpanzees from medical research

26 June - The U.S. National Institutes of Health said on Wednesday it is reducing the number of chimpanzees it uses in biomedical research and will retire most of them to sanctuaries, a decision applauded by animal rights groups... The decision followed a recommendation by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in January. About 300 newly retired chimps will join more than 150 others in sanctuaries, with only 50 being kept for future research. [Reuters](#)

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### WELLNESS

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## 5-Hour Energy's ingredients are subject of court fight in TN

24 June - ...Makers of the popular energy drink 5-Hour Energy are asking a Tennessee judge to make state regulators back off in their request for the company's closely-held recipe, citing state law that protects trade secrets... [S]tate officials said its marketing claims — namely, that there is “no crash” after consuming a shot — were misleading consumers... The Department of Justice asked the company for all of its ingredients, but the companies provided just the amount of caffeine in the drink. All other ingredient information was redacted in the documents the companies provided to federal officials. In November, federal authorities announced that they are looking into 13 deaths linked to energy shots. [Tennessean](#)

## A popular myth about running injuries

26 June - Almost everyone who runs (or has shopped for running shoes) has heard that how your foot pronates, or rolls inward, as you land affects your injury risk. Pronate too much or too little, conventional wisdom tells us, and you'll wind up hurt... [A new study suggest] that supposedly deviant degrees of pronation may not in practice be abnormal and do not contribute to injuries. And if that is the case, he continues, runners, especially those new to the activity, probably do not need to obsess about their foot type. Instead, he says, they could more profitably “pay attention to things like body mass, training, behavior, age and previous injury in order to prevent running-related injuries.” [New York Times](#)

## E-cigarette study hints at quit-aid potential

24 June - In a trial of e-cigarettes among Italian smokers with no desire to quit using tobacco at the outset, up to 13 percent of participants were not smoking regular cigarettes at all a year later. Though the study was not billed as a smoking-cessation test, more than half of participants cut down on tobacco soon after they started using the e-cigarettes. And the percentage who quit smoking entirely by the end rivals results achieved with medications, the authors note in the journal PLOS ONE. [Reuters](#)

## FDA gives go-ahead for two new cigarettes, rejects four

25 June - The U.S. Food and Drug Administration said on Tuesday it will allow two new cigarettes from Lorillard Inc onto the market, adding that while they are not safe, they are no worse than products already being sold... The FDA said it rejected four other applications for new tobacco products, saying they were not proven to be essentially equivalent to an existing, benchmark product. [Reuters](#)

## Melanoma more deadly in young men

26 June - Young men with melanoma were 55% more likely to die than their female counterparts, according to a population-based study with up to 20 years of follow-up. Men ages 15 to 39 accounted for only 39.8% of melanoma cases among some 26,000 in the study population, they comprised 63.6% of deaths due to the disease, Christina S. Gamba, MD, of Stanford University Medical Center, and colleagues reported online in *JAMA Dermatology*. [MedPage Today](#)

## Rapid cooling does little for strained muscles- study

21 June - Blasts of super cold air may feel good on overworked muscles, but the increasingly popular form of cryotherapy does not stop muscle soreness or declines in muscle strength, according to a new study. Though other measures of muscle injury, such as swelling and muscle-cell electrical activity, were slightly improved after the rapid cooling, "overall, it's ineffective," said Gaël Guilhem, the lead author of the study and a researcher at the National Institute for Sports in Paris, France. [Reuters](#)

## Synthetic pot outpacing illegal highs, UN report shows

26 June - Synthetic chemicals manufactured to mimic the effects of marijuana and other illegal drugs are proliferating worldwide, prompting the United Nations to issue a warning in its latest World Drug Report. "New harmful substances have been emerging with unflinching regularity on the drug scene," the UN Office on Drugs and Crime said today. "The international drug control system is floundering for the first time under the speed and creativity of the phenomenon." New recreational drugs, sold under labels like "Spice," "Meow-Meow" and "Bath Salts," for the first time outnumbered controlled substances like ecstasy, marijuana, and opium, the UN said. The new synthetic drugs on the market rose more than 50 percent, to 251, compared with the 234 traditional drugs already subject to international control. [Bloomberg](#)

## The rise of the minimalist workout



24 June - ...In the past, formal recommendations have called for a substantial amount of regular exercise. For example, published guidelines from the Health and Human Services Department in 2008 suggested 150 minutes of moderate exercise per week — the equivalent of five 30-minute walks.

The guidelines added that 75 minutes of vigorous exercise a week, like jogging, could be substituted. These guidelines were based on a large body of science showing that 150 minutes of moderate exercise was associated with a longer life span and a reduced risk of heart disease, diabetes and other illnesses... The most recent research suggests that a few minutes per week of strenuous exercise can improve aerobic fitness, generally more quickly than moderate activity does... But so far, all the studies have been small, usually with only a few dozen volunteers, most of them men and often young. None have been longer than a few months. [New York Times](#)

## Surgery risks for smokers may dissipate after quitting

25 June - Smoking increases the risk for serious complications after major surgery, but former smokers who stop at least a year before going under the knife had risks close to those of never-smokers, according to a new study. Current smokers in the study had higher risk for heart attack, blood clots, pneumonia, and even death post-surgery compared to people who had never smoked and those who had stopped smoking. [Reuters](#)

## Weight loss fails to prevent heart attacks for diabetics in study

25 June - ...A large clinical trial released yesterday raised doubts for the potency of weight loss compared to other strategies, like taking medicines, in people with type II diabetes. The study followed 5,200 patients and lasted 11 years... The exercisers burned off 8.6% of their body weight in the first year, and kept off 6%, or an average of 14 pounds! The people in the control group just lost 0.7% of their body weight in the first year and 3.5% by the end of the study. And there were benefits to that weight loss, including less chronic kidney disease, a major complication for people with diabetes. But when it came to the study's main goal, preventing death from cardiovascular causes, strokes, heart attacks, and chest pain, there was little difference; 403 of the 2,600 dieters had heart attacks, compared to 418 of those in the control group. [Forbes](#)

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## Angola: Over 800 cases of dengue recorded

24 June - At least 834 cases of dengue were recorded in the country since the outbreak of the disease in March until 20 June, causing 10 deaths, Angop learnt on Monday in Luanda. Source from the Ministry of Health said to Angop that from this figure, 657 cases were confirmed in laboratory and 214 people were admitted in the hospital. Luanda leads the list with 831 cases, while the provinces of Malanje and Kwanza Sul recorded two and one case, respectively. [AngolaPress](#)

## Democratic Republic of Congo: Responding to a malaria emergency in Lulingu

17 June - An outbreak of malaria in Lulingu, in Democratic Republic of Congo (DCR)'s South Kivu Province, is affecting large numbers of people, prompting an emergency response from Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). MSF teams have already treated more than 2,500 people since the start of May. Local authorities initially feared they were facing an outbreak of meningitis, after health facilities in the towns of Lulingu and Tchonka were flooded with patients suffering high fevers and convulsions. Most were children under the age of 15. The mortality rates at the hospital were above the threshold of 5 percent (or one in twenty patients, a figure that does not take into account those who died at home). [Doctors Without Borders](#)

## Seven African countries cut child HIV infections by half



25 June - Seven countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the world's worst-hit region in the global AIDS epidemic, have cut the number of new HIV infections in children by 50 percent since 2009, the United Nations AIDS program said on Tuesday. The dramatic reductions - in Botswana, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa and Zambia - mean tens of thousands more babies are now being born free of HIV, UNAIDS said in a report on its Global Plan to tackle the disease in around 20 of the worst affected countries. [Reuters](#)

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## Pakistan: Vaccine shortage as measles claim more lives

25 June - An ongoing measles epidemic in Pakistan has claimed the lives of more than 500 children with many more being hospitalised daily... Dr Zahid Pervaiz, Medical

Superintendent of Mayo Hospital in Lahore, said about 80 per cent of patients were not vaccinated, while the rest who were vaccinated were malnourished and had complications including pneumonia, diarrhoea and measles. Of the 25,000 cases reported around the country, 18,000 were registered alone in the capital of Punjab, the eastern city of Lahore, with more than 150 child deaths of the 495 recorded countrywide. [Channel NewsAsia](#)

## Saudi Arabia: Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) - update

26 June - The Ministry of Health (MoH) in Saudi Arabia has announced seven additional laboratory-confirmed cases and a death in a previously confirmed case of Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV). Four cases have been detected among contacts of confirmed cases in Riyadh and the Eastern Region. They range in age from seven to 15 years, and all were asymptomatic. Two further asymptomatic cases have been record among female healthcare workers in the Eastern Region and Al-Ahsa. A seventh case has been detected in a 50 year-old female in the Eastern Region. She is currently hospitalized with pulmonary disease and her condition is considered stable. In addition, the MoH has announced the death of a previously reported confirmed case from the Eastern Region (the 32 year-old male first reported on 23 June). Globally, from September 2012 to date, WHO has been informed of a total of 77 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV, including 40 deaths. [WHO](#)

## United Arab Emirates: Pesticide deaths - Authorities re-educate pest controllers

23 June - Authorities have held a training session to re-educate pest control contractors following recent deaths from pesticide poisoning... [Gulf News](#) earlier reported that in the past three weeks, a three-year-old girl and her eight-month-old sister died in Ajman, as well as a 35-year-old Filipina in Fujairah, after pesticide poisoning. According to the forensic laboratory report of Ajman Police, the department of public health and environment at Ajman Municipality was able to confirm that the deaths occurred after the family's neighbour bought pesticide from an unlicensed street vendor, and sprayed it in his home without the aid of a specialised technician. [Gulf News](#)

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### USEUCOM

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## Governments weaken EU tobacco curbs to secure agreement

21 June - European Union health ministers agreed on Friday to ease tough planned restrictions on tobacco products to overcome opposition from some governments to the

draft rules. The ministers rejected a ban on slim cigarettes proposed by the bloc's executive, the European Commission, but said they should be sold in normal-sized packets to reduce their appeal. They also agreed to outlaw menthol cigarettes and other tobacco flavorings. The bloc's health commissioner said that, despite the need for compromise in order to reach an agreement, the spirit of the Commission's original proposals has been retained... Cigarette sales in the 27-nation EU bloc have fallen sharply in recent years but - at about 33 percent - Europe still has a higher proportion of smokers than any other region of the globe, according to data from the World Health Organization. [Reuters](#)

## Heart disease deaths show dramatic decline in Europe

25 June - The number of people dying from heart disease in Europe has dropped dramatically in recent decades, thanks largely to the success of cholesterol-lowering drugs and drives to persuade people to quit smoking, scientists said on Wednesday. Cardiovascular disease death rates have more than halved in many countries in the European Union since the early 1980s, according to their study in the *European Heart Journal*. Yet heart disease - which can lead to fatal heart attacks and strokes - remains a leading cause of death in the region and rising rates of obesity and diabetes could soon start to reverse progress made in the past 30 years. [Reuters](#)

## Palestinian National Authority: Palestinian hospitals face closure amid debt crisis

24 June - Private and charitable hospitals in the Palestinian territories have threatened to close down due to the accumulating debts of the Ministry of Health of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). The ministry has failed to settle its debts to the hospitals for seven months leaving those hospitals unable to pay the salaries of employees, leaving pharmaceutical companies refusing to provide those hospitals with their necessary supplies of drugs and medical needs. The Palestinian Ministry of Health and Military Medical Service Department have both been transferring cases to private and charitable hospitals due to the PNA's own cash crunch, and payments have not been made. [Gulf News](#)

## Ukraine: At Chernobyl, radioactive danger lurks in the trees

24 June - ...For almost three decades the forests around the shuttered [Chernobyl] nuclear power plant have been absorbing contamination left from the 1986 reactor explosion. Now climate change and lack of management present a troubling predicament: If these forests burn, strontium 90, cesium 137, plutonium 238 and other radioactive elements would be released, according to an analysis of the human health impacts of wildfire in Chernobyl's exclusion zone conducted by scientists in Germany, Scotland, Ukraine and the United States... Combined with changes in climate, these overcrowded pines are a prescription for wildfire. [Scientific American](#)

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## U.S.: Acetyl fentanyl and patient evaluation and treatment for overdose

20 June - Recently, a number of intravenous drug users have overdosed on a new, non-prescription injected synthetic opioid, acetyl fentanyl. Acetyl fentanyl is a fentanyl analog previously undocumented in illicit drug use that is up to five times more potent than heroin. CDC recommends increased vigilance by public health agencies, emergency departments, state laboratories, medical examiners, and coroners for patients with symptoms consistent with opioid overdose and laboratory results showing an enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) positive for fentanyl. [CDC Health Alert Network](#)

## U.S.: After Wendy Davis's filibuster, Texas abortion bill misses deadline

26 June - Lawmakers in Texas failed to approve a stringent new abortion law in advance of a midnight deadline Tuesday night after chaotic protests and an 11-hour filibuster by state Sen. Wendy Davis. As the protesters raised the noise to deafening levels in the Texas Senate chamber late Tuesday, Republicans scrambled to gather their colleagues at the podium for a stroke-of-midnight vote. [D]espite barely beating the midnight end-of-session deadline with a vote to pass the bill, Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst said the chaos in the chamber prevented him from formally signing it before the deadline passed, effectively killing it.

[Washington Post](#)

## U.S., Arizona: Crews continue to corral Prescott wildfire, now 40% contained

22 June - Firefighters got a big handle on an 11-square-mile wildfire that erupted earlier this week near Prescott, announcing that it has been 40 percent contained. Some evacuations and restrictions were lifted at 5 p.m. on Saturday. However, officials urged residents to remain "cautious" as the wildfire still has the capability to produce significant heat and have flare ups. In addition, fire crews and equipment will still be in the area.

[ABC15](#)

## U.S.: Dengue, yellow fever mosquitoes found in central California

24 June - The aggressive *Aedes aegypti* mosquito—which can transmit dengue, yellow fever, and chikungunya—has been identified in two adjacent central California counties, according to news reports cited yesterday by ProMED-mail, the disease-tracking service of the International Society for Infectious Diseases. The mosquito species, which is known to bite not just at dawn and dusk but also during the day, was confirmed in the city of Madera in Madera County on Jun 20, Sierra News reported. A day later it was identified in Fresno County, according to a local TV news report. [CIDRAP News Scan](#)

## U.S.: West Nile virus and other arboviral diseases — United States, 2012

28 June - In 2012, CDC received reports of 5,780 nationally notifiable arboviral disease cases (excluding dengue). A large multistate outbreak of WNV disease accounted for 5,674 (98%) of reported cases, the highest number reported since 2003. Other reported etiologies included Eastern equine encephalitis virus (EEEV), Powassan virus (POWV), St. Louis encephalitis virus (SLEV), and California serogroup viruses such as La Crosse virus (LACV) and Jamestown Canyon virus (JCV). Arboviruses continue to cause serious illness in substantial numbers of persons in the United States. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

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## China-Africa: When the drugs don't work, but just make it worse

27 June - China is one of the world's leading manufacturers of medicines and a main source of the drugs sold in Africa. On a continent where millions die each year from treatable diseases, demand for cheap drugs is high. But like many other Chinese-made goods, these products also sometimes suffer from quality issues. Whether they contain impurities, were stored incorrectly, or have the wrong amount of active ingredient, the result is that those taking them may be putting their faith, and lives, in the hands of drugs that don't work. In fact, at worst, these faulty medicines may even be inadvertently strengthening the diseases they are meant to be fighting. [Think Africa Press](#)

## India: In New Delhi, a help line for women is flooded with calls

21 June - ...The busy New Delhi help line was set up by the city government after a fatal gang rape six months ago set off nationwide protests against sexual assaults on women and prompted complaints that calls to a police hotline in New Delhi often went unanswered or were met with indifference. The new 181 help line has received more than 138,000 calls since it was launched at the end of December — stark evidence, its staff says, of a newfound courage among Indian women to report crimes that they might have suffered silently just months ago. Women call to say they are being stalked and molested on the streets, raped, harassed by phone and Facebook, beaten by their husbands, or attacked with acid by spurned lovers... In the first three months of this year, 359 cases of rape were reported in the capital, more than double the number reported in the same period last year. [Washington Post](#)

## India: Weather hampers rescue of flood victims



23 June - Dense fog and rain briefly hampered efforts on Sunday to evacuate thousands of people stranded in the northern Indian state of Uttarakhand, where at least 1,000 people have died in monsoon flooding and landslides, army officials said. The army suspended helicopter flights to rescue stranded people after heavy fog descended on the Himalayan region on Sunday morning, but the evacuation flights resumed in the afternoon, the military said. Troops were also building makeshift bridges, and some people were being rescued by soldiers on the ground, according to a statement released by the Defense Ministry. On Sunday, Indian troops evacuated 1,000 stranded people from the mountains around Jungle Chatti in the Kedar Valley of Uttarakhand, the ministry said. [New York Times](#)

## WHO: Dengue cases up dramatically in Asia-Pacific

26 June - Although the extent of dengue outbreaks in Asia and Pacific nations has varied, the region as a whole has seen a 32% increase in cases so far this year compared with the same period last year, the World Health Organization's (WHO's) Western Pacific Region Office (WPRO) said today. Percentagewise, Laos has seen the biggest increase among Asian countries, from 1,268 dengue cases last year to 10,159 cases this year for comparable periods, a 700% increase. Singapore's cases rose by almost 500%, from 1,716 to 10,108. Overall, countries listed in the WHO's Asian sub-region—which includes Australia—reported a 19% dengue case increase, from 74,623 to 88,806 so far this year. New Caledonia accounted for the entire increase in the WHO's Pacific sub-region. Its case count increased from 200 at this point in 2012 to 10,318 so far this year. (The WPRO also lists 6,217 Solomon Island cases so far this year but did not have 2012 figures for that nation.) [CIDRAP News Scan](#)

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## Feeding Haiti: A new menu



22 June - AID workers sometimes blame Haiti's seemingly limitless supply of cheap imported rice for the country's struggle to feed itself. More than half the population lives on the land, but still the country ships in half its food and 80% of its rice... The imports are prevalent partly because, at 3%, Haiti's import tariffs on food are among the lowest in the Caribbean. This, combined with generous subsidies to farmers in the United States, means that the rice is cheaper than

locally produced food. Many have argued for higher tariffs to protect local farmers. But a new drive to improve self-sufficiency aims not to raise tariffs but to make Haitian agriculture more efficient—and to change Haitian diets, too. [Economist](#)

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