

30 May 2014

Army Public Health Weekly Update

U.S. Army Public Health Command



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

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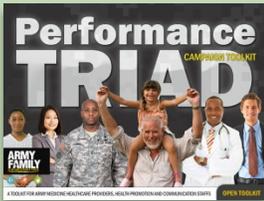
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Performance Triad Campaign Toolkit

The Performance Triad Campaign Toolkit, designed for health care providers and health promotion and communication staffs, is now available for download on the [Health Information Products eCatalog](#).



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U.S. MILITARY

Lawmakers call for criminal investigation of Veterans Affairs facilities

25 May – The Justice Department should enter the investigation of whether Veterans Affairs employees have falsified records to cover up long waits at VA medical facilities, Democratic and Republican lawmakers said Sunday... The VA's inspector general is investigating 26 sites

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

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to determine whether employees covered up long waits for medical appointments, and the Justice Department is already involved to some extent... The chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, meanwhile, signaled that as lawmakers step up oversight of the VA, his committee would look into whether Congress was providing enough funding to the department. "I suspect we are going to need more funding if we're going to do justice and provide the high-quality care that veterans deserve," Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) told CNN's "State of the Union." Sanders has questioned whether the VA's goal of scheduling patients within 14 days of desired appointment dates was too ambitious, given its current budget.

[Los Angeles Times](#)

Mental health providers train to treat service members

27 May - Finding behavioral health support sensitive to the needs of National Guardsmen, reservists and their family members is getting easier thanks to a growing training initiative available to civilian mental health providers. Started in 2011, the Star Behavioral Health Providers program schools civilian mental and behavioral health professionals on the unique aspects of military life. The second piece of the program is to connect members of the guard and reserve community, including Air National Guard and veterans, with professionals who have completed the Start Behavioral Health Provider workshops. The program is a collaborative effort between the Center for Deployment Psychology, which provides the training, and the Military Family Research Institute at Purdue University in Indiana. [Health.mil](#)

Next-gen gas mask cooler, more comfortable

27 May - The rollout of the Army's new gas mask is underway, but researchers already have plans for the next-gen model: An integrated mask-helmet design with a battery-powered, fan-driven air filtration system. Tests of the system — which developers at the Army's Edgewood Chemical Biological Center in Aberdeen, Maryland, say will be lighter than units now in service — have been underway for more than a year. Recent trials involved modifying the commercial version of the M50, one of the masks now being rolled out to soldiers, and putting civilian subjects through stressful activities, such as crawling with a rifle and shoveling sand. The modifications allow a blower to move air across the wearer's face, rather than having the user suck the air through the purification filter. It's a simple step that not only improves protection and creates a better seal on the mask, but also circulates air for the user for a more comfortable experience — compared with other gas masks, anyway.

[Army Times](#)

'Serious conditions' at Phoenix Veterans Affairs Office, watchdog says

28 May - A watchdog's report found systemic problems at Department of Veterans Affairs health-care facilities, including improper procedures for scheduling patient appointments and efforts to hide excessive wait times, increasing the pressure on embattled VA Secretary Eric Shinseki. The interim report by the VA's independent inspector general focuses on the

Phoenix VA Health Care System in Arizona, where wait times for patient appointments were improperly reported, but also points to widespread scheduling problems throughout the VA health-care system. "Our reviews at more VA medical facilities...have confirmed that inappropriate scheduling practices are systemic," the report said. The inspector general said it had identified potential criminal and civil violations, and is coordinating efforts with the Justice Department. [Wall Street Journal](#)

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GLOBAL

CSIP participates in global law enforcement operation targeting fake medicines

23 May – Nearly 200 enforcement agencies across 111 countries have taken part in Operation Pangea VII targeting criminal networks behind the sale of fake medicines via illicit online pharmacies. The operation led to 237 arrests worldwide and the seizure of nearly USD 36 million worth of potentially dangerous medicines. In terms of the number of participating INTERPOL member countries, Operation Pangea VII is the largest-ever global operation targeting fake medicines. It resulted in the launch of 1,235 investigations, the removal of more than 19,000 adverts for illicit pharmaceuticals via social media platforms and more than 10,600 websites shut down. [Center for Safe Internet Pharmacies](#)

Economic slowdown tied to rise in obesity in richer nations

27 May - The rate of obesity continues to climb across the world's most developed countries, with certain nations and groups of people such as women and the poor hit harder by the recent economic crisis, the OECD said on Tuesday. While rates are rising as much as 3 percent a year in countries such as Australia, France, Mexico and Switzerland, they have been fairly stable in other countries such as the United States, Canada, Korea and Italy, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development said in report. [Reuters](#)

Experts' anger over 'invisible' rabies death toll

26 May - A shortage of funds for vaccinating dogs is costing the lives of tens of thousands of children every year. The head of the world animal health organisation (OIE) told BBC News that the invisible killer could be eliminated for one tenth of the cost of treating patients. The most recent figures suggest around 55,000 people die every year from rabies. Around 40% of those who are bitten are under 15 years of age. [BBC News](#)

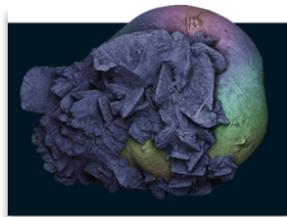
Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) – update

28 May - On 25 May 2014, the National IHR Focal Point of Jordan reported to WHO an additional Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) case in Amman, Jordan. The patient is known to have comorbidities, no history of travel, and no history of contact with animals. He also has no history of contact with a laboratory confirmed MERS-CoV case. The patient is known to have comorbidities, no history of travel, and no history of contact with animals. He also has no history of contact with a laboratory confirmed MERS-CoV case. [WHO](#)

'Resist urge to control e-cigarettes', WHO told

29 May - A letter signed by more than 50 researchers and public health specialists is urging the World Health Organization (WHO) to "resist the urge to control and suppress e-cigarettes". The letter says the devices - which deliver nicotine in a vapour - could be a "significant health innovation"... The WHO said it was still deciding what recommendations to make to governments. Supporters of e-cigarettes, who argue the products are a low-risk substitute for smoking, fear they might become subject to reduction targets and advertising bans... Critics say not enough is known about their long-term health effects... The letter says: "These products could be among the most significant health innovations of the 21st Century - perhaps saving hundreds of millions of lives. [BBC News](#)

Shattering kidney stones: An improved method of eliminating the agonizing pellets



1 June - ...[Some kidney stones] grow so large that they block urinary flow and require medical intervention. The most common way to get rid of them is shock wave lithotripsy, a noninvasive technique in which high-frequency shock waves directed at the stone generate enough pressure to shatter it into tiny, sandlike fragments. This spring a team of urologists, engineers and mathematicians at Duke University improved on the technique. The researchers cut a small groove in the lens that focuses the shock waves and found that the simple adjustment optimizes wave shape so that the procedure is more accurate and minimizes damage to surrounding body tissues. It is a relatively cheap, straightforward innovation that may soon help treat millions of kidney stone patients worldwide. [Scientific American](#)

Silver too small to see, but everywhere you look

23 May - ...Amid concern over the rise of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, silver — an old-time remedy for infection — is enjoying a renaissance. And it's a very 21st-century one: High-tech, microscopic particles of the metal are being embedded as antimicrobial agents in

products from athletic clothing to stuffed toys, from bed linens to food containers. An inventory of consumer products with silver from the Wilson Center, the public policy and research organization based in Washington, lists everything from a “contour foam neck support” pillow to lounging socks from the Sharper Image... Scientists worry about evidence that the particles may cause unexpected environmental harm; new studies suggest they may damaging plants and fish in ways that had not been predicted by traditional silver exposure. And they worry about other unresolved health issues, such as evidence of cellular damage and the apparent ability of the particles to cross the blood-brain barrier. [New York Times](#)

Wearable tech helps you live in the moment

29 May - ...[We] we need to have the right information in the precise moment in which we are making a decision. Wearables—wristbands, watches, clothing, or in some cases, pollution masks with built-in wireless sensors—may be part of the solution. Capable of unobtrusively collecting all sorts of data on the street, comparing them with historical data from government, academic, and other sources, and pushing information to the user at relevant times, this new generation of gadgets promises to provide more current, actionable information than laptops or even smart phones. Existing wearables... largely fall into two camps: Those that provide information (Google glass, “smart” watches), and those that collect information (FitBit, the now-discontinued Nike Fuel Band). The next generation of wearables aims to combine those two functions, collecting personal data and then analyzing it against various other data sets to provide customized information and context-based suggestions. [Scientific American](#)

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INFLUENZA

CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 20 (May 11-17, 2014), influenza activity continued to decrease in the United States.

- **Viral Surveillance:** Of 3,885 specimens tested and reported during week 20, 339 (8.7%) were positive for influenza.
- **Pneumonia and Influenza Mortality:** The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza (P&I) was below the epidemic threshold.
- **Influenza-Associated Pediatric Deaths:** One influenza-associated pediatric death was reported.
- **Outpatient Illness Surveillance:** The proportion of outpatient visits for influenza-like illness (ILI) was 1.1%, which is below the national baseline of 2.0%. [FluView](#)

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

For week 20/2014:

- Low-intensity influenza activity was reported by 25 reporting countries.
- Of 68 sentinel specimens tested across 17 countries, six (9%) were positive for influenza virus.
- No hospitalised, laboratory-confirmed influenza cases were reported.

With influenza activity continuing to decline in all reporting countries, after five months of active transmission, the 2013–14 influenza season is coming to an end. During this season, A(H1N1)pdm09 and A(H3N2) viruses co-circulated in almost equal proportions. The intensity of the season was low in many countries throughout the season and only reached high intensity in three countries. [Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

Naval Health Research Center: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For Week 20, ending 17 May 2014:

- Influenza: Two cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza (type B) among US military basic trainees.
- *C. pneumoniae* found in recent FRI and pneumonia cases at Ft. Leonard Wood
- FRI surveillance at eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were at elevated at CGTC Cape May. [NHRC Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update](#)

PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

Human infection with avian influenza A(H7N9) virus – update

28 May - On 26 May 2014, the National Health and Family Planning Commission (NHFPC) of China notified WHO of 3 additional laboratory-confirmed cases of human infection with avian influenza A(H7N9) virus... The overall risk assessment has not changed. [WHO](#)

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Cadbury Malaysia in pork DNA investigation

28 May - Chocolate maker Cadbury Malaysia has launched an investigation after two of its products were found to contain traces of pork DNA. The company voluntarily recalled its Dairy Milk hazelnut and Dairy Milk roasted almond bars last Saturday after Malaysia's Ministry of Health confirmed it had found pork DNA in them. Cadbury Malaysia, on its Facebook page and official website, said: "We understand how important halal is to the Muslim community. It is also of the highest importance to us here at Cadbury. Since our first learning of this, we have been actively engaging with the concerned authorities to investigate the issue with the highest urgency." [Al Jazeera](#)

California chicken still linked to Salmonella

28 May - An outbreak of antibiotic-resistant salmonella linked to a California chicken company hasn't run its course after more than a year, with 50 new illnesses in the past two months and 574 people sickened since March 2013. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says there are about eight new salmonella illnesses linked to the outbreak a week, most of them in California. So far, there has been no recall of Foster Farms chicken. The Agriculture Department says it is monitoring Foster Farms facilities and that measured rates of salmonella in the company's products have been going down since the outbreak began... The CDC said 37 percent of victims were hospitalized, and that the outbreak is resistant to many antibiotics. In addition, the CDC said that 13 percent of the victims had developed blood infections, almost three times the normal rate. Victims came from 27 states and Puerto Rico. [ABC News](#)

Deadly pig virus re-infects US farm, fuels supply fears

28 May - An Indiana farm has become the first to confirm publicly it suffered a second outbreak of a deadly pig virus, fueling concerns that a disease that has wiped out 10 percent of the U.S. hog population will be harder to contain than producers and veterinarians expected. The farm, through its veterinarian, publicly acknowledged on Tuesday a repeat incident of Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea virus (PEDv), which has killed up to 7 million pigs... The state and federal effort to stamp out PEDv has operated on an assumption that a pig, once infected, develops immunity and will not be afflicted by the disease again for at least several years... But a year after the virus was identified, repeat outbreaks have occurred at farms but not been publicly confirmed before now. [VOA](#)

Information not on the label

26 May - ...Some 93 percent of respondents to a New York Times survey in January 2013 said they wanted genetically modified ingredients identified, even though only about half said they would avoid G.M.O. products. More than 1.4 million people have signed the Center for Food Safety's petition urging the federal agency to require G.M.O. labeling...

"Labeling space is very limited, and mandatory labeling would create an unnecessary stigma," said Claire Parker, spokeswoman for the Coalition for Safe Affordable Food, which represents businesses and organizations opposed to G.M.O. labeling... "Labeling space is very limited, and mandatory labeling would create an unnecessary stigma," said Claire Parker, spokeswoman for the Coalition for Safe Affordable Food, which represents businesses and organizations opposed to G.M.O. labeling. [New York Times](#)

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WELLNESS

Cigarette prices and smoking prevalence after a tobacco tax increase — Turkey, 2008 and 2012

30 May - Raising the price of tobacco products has been shown to reduce tobacco consumption in the United States and other high-income countries, and evidence of this impact has been growing for low- and middle-income countries as well... From 2008 to 2012, the average price paid for cigarettes increased by 42.1%, cigarettes became less affordable, and smoking prevalence decreased by 14.6%. The largest reduction in smoking was observed among persons with lower socioeconomic status (SES), highlighting the potential role of tax policy in reducing health disparities across socioeconomic groups.

[Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

Fight heats up over First Lady's school-nutrition program

27 May - The fight over school lunches intensified Tuesday as first lady Michelle Obama defended her signature school-nutrition program during a meeting with school officials and decried efforts in Congress to allow schools to delay the program. "Now is not the time to roll back everything we have worked for," Ms. Obama said, before heading into the meeting in Washington. The nutritional rules, which Ms. Obama championed through the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act in 2010, increase the amount of fruits and vegetables in school meals, decrease sodium levels and modify portion sizes, among other things. The rules have sparked pushback from some school-nutrition officials and Republican lawmakers who point to higher costs, wasted food and difficulty meeting deadlines for changes. [Wall Street Journal](#)

Iodine deficiency common in pregnancy, pediatricians warn



26 May - Many pregnant and breast-feeding women are deficient in iodine and should take a daily supplement containing iodide, according to a leading group of pediatricians. Iodine, generally obtained from iodized salt, produces thyroid hormone, an essential component for normal brain development in the developing baby. But as consumption of processed foods has increased,

so has iodine deficiency because the salt in processed foods is not iodized, according to a policy statement from the American Academy of Pediatrics. "This is the first time that the American Academy of Pediatrics has issued a statement on iodine," said Dr. Jerome Paulson, medical director for national and global affairs at the Children's National Health System and chair of the academy's Council on Environmental Health. [Medline Plus](#)

Obesity gene may explain why some gain weight as they age

27 May - A defective gene linked to obesity appears to affect impulse control and food choices. And this could explain why people with the gene have so much trouble maintaining a healthy weight as they age, a new U.S. study says. Middle-aged and older people with obesity-associated variants of the FTO gene tend to gain weight, according to researchers from the National Institutes of Health. Moreover, scans detected reduced function in brain regions that govern impulsivity and perception of food texture and taste, the researchers found. "Sure enough, people who carry one or two copies of the FTO variant show increased intake of high-calorie or fatty food as they age," said senior author Dr. Madhav Thambisetty, chief of clinical and translational neuroscience at the National Institute on Aging's Laboratory of Behavioral Neuroscience. [CBS News](#)

'Smart pills' with chips, cameras and robotic parts raise legal, ethical questions

24 May - As the size and cost of chip technology has fallen dramatically over the past few years, dozens of companies and academic research teams are rushing to make ingestible or implantable chips that will help patients track the condition of their bodies in real time and in a level of detail that they have never seen before. Several have been approved by the Food and Drug Administration, including a transponder containing a person's medical history that is injected under the skin, a camera pill that can search the colon for tumors, and the technology, made by Proteus Digital Health, that Snodgrass is using. That system is being used to make sure older people take their pills; it involves navigating a tablet and wearing a patch, which some patients might find challenging. [Washington Post](#)

To age well, walk

27 May - Regular exercise, including walking, significantly reduces the chance that a frail older person will become physically disabled, according to one of the largest and longest-running studies of its kind to date. The results, published on Tuesday in the journal JAMA, reinforce the necessity of frequent physical activity for our aging parents, grandparents and, of course, ourselves. [New York Times](#)

Trust your doctor, not Wikipedia, say scientists

27 May - Wikipedia, the online encyclopaedia, contains errors in nine out of 10 of its health entries, and should be treated with caution, a study has said. Scientists in the US compared entries about conditions such as heart disease, lung cancer, depression and diabetes with peer-reviewed medical research. They said most articles in Wikipedia contained "many

errors". Wikimedia UK, its British arm, said it was "crucial" that people with health concerns spoke to their GP first. [BBC News](#)

Vision training to boost sports performance

26 May - ...Vision training actually has little to do with improving eyesight. The techniques, a form of perceptual learning, are intended to improve the ability to process what is seen. The idea is that if visual sensory neurons are repeatedly activated, they increase their ability to send electrical signals from one cell to another across connecting synapses... "A little discomfort is expected," as when you exert yourself lifting weights, said Al Wile, the director of sports vision at the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, and a longtime proponent of vision training. In addition to improving the performance of athletes, he said he had been able to help cadets pass pilot vision proficiency tests after they had failed. [New York Times](#)

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USAFRICOM

Guinea: Oral cholera vaccine is success in Guinea



29 May - An oral vaccine for cholera has proven to be highly effective and could change the way future outbreaks are controlled. The medical aid group Doctors Without Borders – also known as MSF -- says the vaccine was used during a 2012 outbreak in Guinea...

There was a fear that use of the vaccine would pull resources away from treatment – would be too logistically complicated – and potentially not necessarily have an impact. And what we've seen through this study is that it's effective in terms of protecting individuals in response to an epidemic, but it's also feasible and did not pull away resources. [VOA](#)

Sierra Leone: Ebola patients removed from clinic

28 May - Six people suspected of having the deadly Ebola virus in Sierra Leone have been "aggressively" taken away from a clinic by their relatives, in defiance of medical staff, an official has said. One of them has died amid fears that the highly contagious virus could spread, the official added... Dr Amara Jambai, the director of disease prevention and control at Sierra Leone's health ministry, told the BBC that staff at the clinic in Koindu town in eastern Sierra Leone had tried to stop the six patients from being removed. However, the families had been "aggressive" as they took their relatives away, he said. The BBC's international development correspondent Mark Doyle says while it is unclear why relatives

did this, a Sierra Leonean official speculated that it was because they thought their loved ones would die in the clinic or on transfer to a hospital in Kenema, the main city in the region. [BBC News](#)

Somalia: UN agency warns of Somalia hunger deaths



27 May - About 200,000 children under the age of five could die from severe malnutrition in Somalia by the end of the year, unless the United Nations receives emergency funds to stave off mass hunger, UN officials have said... About 50,000 Somali children under five currently suffer from acute severe malnutrition, according to UNICEF... UNICEF has been providing 70 percent of health services including medicines, vaccinations, staff salaries and fuel to run hospital generators, especially in central and southern Somalia, Boulhierac said. [Al Jazeera](#)

Tunisia drug use grows amid economic stress

28 May – Subutex [is] an opiate-replacement drug that is marketed as a substitute for methadone to help heroin users get clean. Subutex, the brand name of buprenorphine, was first seen in France in 1996. Cheaper than heroin and harder to detect in drug tests and physical searches, it had previously swept through parts of southern Asia and Eastern Europe. While Subutex has been around for years in Tunisia, treatment workers say its use has increased since the 2011 revolution forced out autocrat Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. An uptick in cross-border smuggling with neighbouring Algeria and Libya, combined with a depressed economy, are driving the addiction. Now, thousands are left further impoverished, ostracised from their families and dying from syringe-spread disease... There are 12,000 Subutex users in Tunisia, according to a 2012 survey by the centre; a new survey is currently under way... Needle sharing has made hepatitis C and, to a lesser extent, HIV, prevalent among users. [Al Jazeera](#)

West Africa: Doctors struggle to contain Ebola outbreak

29 May - The ebola outbreak currently spreading through West African countries is "serious" and not under control, an expert with the World Health Organisation has said. On Wednesday in Geneva, Pierre Formenty, a doctor with the international health body who had just returned from a trip to Guinea, said the virus, which has already claimed 186 lives in Guinea since March, and has since spread to Sierra Leone and Liberia, was not on the decline. "The situation is serious, you can't say it is under control as cases are continuing and it is spreading geographically," Formenty said. "There was no decline. In fact it is because we are not able to capture all the outbreak that we were under the impression there was a decline," he said. [Al Jazeera](#)

West Africa: Ebola virus disease

28 May – **Guinea**: From 23 May 2014 to 27 May 2014, 4 new districts reported 14 new clinical cases of Ebola virus disease (EVD) and 5 deaths... As of 18:00 on 27 May 2014, the total cumulative number of cases due to EVD is 281 and 186 deaths...

In **Sierra Leone**, 16 cases, (7 laboratory-confirmed, 9 suspected) and 5 community deaths have been reported from Kailahun district. The district is located in the eastern region of Sierra Leone sharing borders with Gueckedou in Guinea and also with Liberia.

In **Liberia** there have been no new cases since 9 April 2014. Social mobilization and surveillance have been enhanced in border districts. [WHO](#)

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USCENTCOM

Iran reports its first 2 cases of MERS virus

28 May - Iranian media say the country has recorded its first two cases of the potentially fatal Middle East respiratory virus, first reported in Saudi Arabia two years ago... Iran's Hamshahri daily on Wednesday quoted health ministry official Mohammad Mahdi Gouya as saying the virus was confirmed in two sisters in Kerman in southeastern Iran. One was reported to be in critical condition. [Bloomberg Businessweek](#)

Iran: Supreme leader pushes fertility campaign

27 May - Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader, has called for a population increase, an edict likely to restrict access to contraception. In an edict on his website, he wrote that increasing the population of 76 million people would "strengthen national identity" and counter "undesirable aspects of Western lifestyles." Since 1986 the population growth rate has fallen to 1.22 percent from 3.2 percent, according to the C.I.A. World Factbook. Reformist Iranians fear the campaign could undermine the position of women in the country. [New York Times](#)

Saudi Arabia: Guarding against disease among pilgrims to Mecca

26 May - ...Preventing outbreaks during the hajj is a major focus of the new field of "mass gathering medicine," and last week in The Lancet, Saudi and European scientists affiliated with the new Global Center for Mass Gathering Medicine, based in the Saudi health ministry, outlined the protective steps the kingdom will take. This year's hajj is expected to start in early October. To prevent gastrointestinal illness, pilgrims will be barred from bringing in fresh food; kitchen workers across the country will be swabbed for pathogens; and water

chlorination will be monitored. Mosquito spraying will be intensified, especially in housing for pilgrims from countries with dengue virus. Proof of vaccinations against polio, yellow fever and meningitis will be required... Arrivals from Africa's "meningitis belt" will get antibiotics, and those from countries with polio will be revaccinated; 500,000 polio vaccine doses are given annually to pilgrims... There was no transmission of MERS during the 2012 or 2013 hajj, the report said, though it did not mention that new cases have surged past 500 since spring, especially in Jeddah, where most pilgrims land. [New York Times](#)

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USEUCOM

Armenia: Tackling drug-resistant TB

8 May - ...In Armenia, nearly 10 percent of people newly infected with TB, and 43 percent of those who are re-treated, are now resistant to at least two of the main antibiotics used to treat the disease. The toxic, second-line drugs that sufferers must take instead can have severe side effects, including extreme nausea, vomiting, deafness, depression and psychosis. The treatment lasts around 2 years, and fewer than half of patients are successfully treated. But in Armenia, international NGO Doctors Without Borders has begun using a new antibiotic, bedaquiline, for patients such as Arman who have no other options left. It is the first new TB drug to be developed in over forty years... In partnership with the Armenian Ministry of Health, Doctors Without Borders is also using rapid molecular tests, which means people can be diagnosed with drug-resistant TB within hours, rather than weeks. [Al Jazeera](#)

Spain: A low-cost, sustainable, second generation system for surveillance of people living with HIV, 2002 to 2011

22 May - A second-generation surveillance system of people infected with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) has been implemented in Spain. Behavioural and clinical data were collected between 2002 and 2011 through an annual one-day, cross-sectional survey in public hospitals, including all in- and outpatients receiving HIV-related care on the survey day...Implementation of a low-cost, sustainable system for second-generation surveillance in people living with HIV is feasible. In Spain, the information obtained has helped to define and refine public health policy and document treatment effectiveness. [Eurosurveillance](#)

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Canada: Skin cancers most common in Canada, and on the rise

28 May - Skin cancers -- particularly the most deadly kind, melanoma -- are the most common kinds of cancers in Canada. And whereas the incidences of some cancers are actually going down, melanoma cases are on the rise, in both women and men. In 2014, it is estimated that 6,500 new melanoma diagnoses will be made, and 1,050 Canadians will die from this form of cancer. [CTV News](#)

U.S.: Area evacuated as Alaska wildfire grows



26 May - A wildfire chewing through the forest of Alaska's Kenai Peninsula has expanded in size, prompting authorities to order the evacuation of 1,000 structures, officials said. The massive fire south of Anchorage covered nearly 243 square miles and was 30 percent contained, according to a posting Sunday night on the Alaska

Interagency Incident Management Team's Facebook page. It was burning in the 1.9 million-acre Kenai National Wildlife Refuge. The number of people told to flee their homes isn't clear, said Michelle Weston, spokeswoman with Management Team, which includes the state Division of Forestry and federal and local officials. The Funny River Fire is named after a nearby road where all residents were being evacuated. She says Alaska State Troopers were going door to door, evacuating an area that's mostly second homes and is home to many retirees. She says no injuries were reported, and it's unclear if any buildings were damaged. [MSN](#)

U.S.: Landslide danger ends search for 3 in Colorado

28 May - Authorities are bracing for the possibility of another landslide in a remote part of western Colorado amid dangerously unstable conditions that led them to call off the search for three ranchers missing there. Mesa County Sheriff Stan Hilkey said Tuesday the search eventually could resume... but it might not be safe enough to do so until summer... The three men were checking on irrigation problems caused by an initial slide Sunday when a large chunk of a ridge broke off, sending soggy earth spilling like wet cement... The slide is 3 miles long, about three-quarters of a mile across at its widest and several hundred feet deep at the center. Even at its edges, the pile is 30 feet deep, Hilkey said. [San Jose Mercury News](#)

U.S.: Measles hits Amish communities, and U.S. cases reach 20-year high



29 May - Members of Amish communities in Ohio traveled to the Philippines for heartfelt reasons: they were there on service projects to help less fortunate people. Unfortunately, they came home with unwelcome hitchhikers: measles viruses. Those travelers hadn't been vaccinated against this highly contagious disease, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said

Thursday. As a result, they have triggered an outbreak of more than 130 cases, primarily among their unvaccinated friends and relatives in Amish communities. Add that to other cases and there have been 288 cases of measles in the United States so far this year, CDC officials said. And while that number is small compared with the hundreds of thousands of cases that swept the nation in the 1960s before vaccination campaigns succeeded, it's the largest number since the mid-1990s. [NPR](#)

U.S.: Oklahoma reports fatal Heartland virus case

27 May - Oklahoma health officials today reported the state's first Heartland virus infection, in a Delaware County resident who died from complications from the illness. In a statement, the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) said the patient is only the 10th person in the nation to contract the disease and the second to die from infection with the virus, which has been found in Lone Star ticks and is thought to be spread by tick bites. The new virus, a member of the phlebovirus genus, was first detected in two Missouri men in 2009, and in 2013 researchers found the pathogen in Lone Star ticks near where the patients were infected... The disease is different from other tick-borne illnesses, because it is caused by a virus rather than bacterium and can't be treated with antibiotics. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

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China scrambles to adjust to baby boomlet

29 May - China's health officials are taking steps to accommodate two million more births annually after a landmark decision last year to relax population controls. Chinese couples have "embraced" new population measures that have strained hospital facilities, the National Health and Family Planning Commission said in a press briefing Thursday. Authorities will be rolling out additional pregnancy-related services, such as prenatal care and hospital equipment, to support increased demand, commission officials said... In

November China's leaders announced a policy shift to allow married couples to have two children if one spouse is an only child. Previously, in many urban areas, the rule required that both spouses be only children. [Wall Street Journal](#)

India: Door by door, India strives to know more about death

22 May - ...Nearly 70 percent of deaths in India, five million in all each year, take place in the absence of medical supervision, according to the office, which is responsible for registering births and deaths. To fill this gap, a new survey, the [Million Death Study](#), is trying to turn the clock back on a million premature deaths that took place between 2001 and 2014, sifting through evidence provided by families and caregivers. By assigning causes to these deaths, based on the accounts of witnesses, the study hopes to identify the major causes of premature death in India... While full results are not expected for four to five years, some preliminary findings have been released, and those have stirred controversy. The survey's estimate of total malaria deaths in India is more than 10 times the World Health Organization's. Its figure for deaths related to H.I.V. infections is significantly lower than what the United Nations predicted, and the Indian government, which has spent heavily to control the spread of the disease, may take that into account as it settles on future medical priorities. [New York Times](#)

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Brazil: Food seizures at World Cup hotels

27 May - A Brazilian consumer defence agency said it's found past-expiration food in the hotels where national soccer teams from Italy and England will stay during the World Cup. The Rio de Janeiro state agency said on its website late Monday that the inspections were part of an effort to enforce food safety codes ahead of next month's tournament... The agency also said both hotels didn't provide condoms for sale at cost, nor information about sexually transmitted diseases, as required by law. [Al Jazeera](#)

Haiti: Chikungunya

26 May - Haitian health authorities will distribute pain medication to clinics around the country amid a surge in suspected cases of a mosquito-borne virus that is new to the region, a government official said Friday [23 May 2014]. More than 5500 suspected cases of the chikungunya virus have been reported in Haiti, up from 1500 cases a week earlier, Public Health Minister Florence Guillaume said. The outbreak has been spreading around the

Caribbean since the 1st known locally transmitted case was reported in French St Martin in December [2013]. There have been more than 55 000 suspected and confirmed cases in the region. [ProMED-mail](#)

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