

7 March 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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## Leader's Overview: An Introduction to the Performance Triad

The intention of the Army Ready and Resilient campaign is to integrate and synchronize multiple Army-wide programs aimed at improving physical, psychological and emotional health. The Performance Triad is a key enabler of the campaign that promotes healthy lifestyle choices that combine the right amounts of **Sleep**, **Activity**, and **Nutrition** to reach optimal performance.

The Performance Triad requires leaders at all levels to be engaged both professionally and personally in health, and the health conversation.

**See all the Performance Triad products.**



### VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

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- Saudi Arabia: Saudi Arabia reports two MERS cases, one fatal

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- Caribbean chikungunya cases may now top 10,000
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## Performance Triad: 26-Week Health Challenge

The Performance Triad challenges you to enhance your health! **Sleep**, **Activity**, and **Nutrition** are vital components to healthy living.

However, getting all three can be difficult when other responsibilities compete for your time and energy. The Performance Triad 26-Week Health Challenge is designed to kick start healthy habits that you will have for a lifetime.

[See all the Performance Triad products.](#)



## U.S. MILITARY

### Inflammation may be PTSD risk factor

27 February - High levels of C-reactive protein (CRP), an inflammation marker, were seen in soldiers who later developed post-traumatic stress disorder, researchers said. Among U.S. Marines and Navy personnel who consented to participate in a prospective study, each 10-fold increment in CRP levels at pre-deployment baseline was associated with a 51% increased likelihood of showing at least one PTSD symptom after deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan (odds ratio 1.51, 95% CI 1.15-1.97, P=0.003), reported Dewleen Baker, MD, of the VA Healthcare System in San Diego, and colleagues. Writing *online in JAMA Psychiatry*, the researchers proposed that inflammation may predispose people to develop PTSD. [MedPage Today](#)

### Military families are using food stamps more than ever

20 February - ...Military families used food stamps to purchase supplies at Defense Department grocery stores in fiscal 2013 more than in any other year, according to the Defense Commissary Agency. Members of the military redeemed almost \$104 million worth of food stamps at commissaries from October 2012 through September 2013 fiscal year, as first reported by CNN. The figure has risen consistently since the economic recession hit in fiscal 2009. Military families used about \$5 million more worth of food stamps last year than in 2012. Their use of this government assistance, formally known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, has increased by more than 300 percent since 2007. [Defense One](#)

### Rates of many mental disorders much higher in soldiers than in civilians



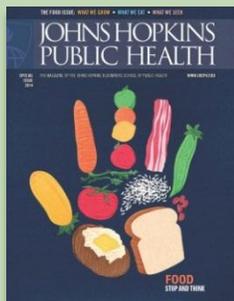
4 March - The largest study of mental-health risk ever conducted among the U.S. military has found that many soldiers suffer from some form of mental illness, and rates of many of these disorders are much higher in soldiers than in civilians. The study's findings, related to suicide attempts and deaths, were released in a series of three reports published in this week's edition of *JAMA Psychiatry*. Authors noted the differences in disorder rates to be significant. [CNN](#)

### Senate blocks change to military sex assault cases

6 March - The Senate on Thursday blocked a bill that would have stripped senior military commanders of their authority to prosecute or prevent charges for alleged rapes and other serious offenses, capping an emotional, nearly yearlong fight over how to curb sexual assault in the ranks. The vote was 55-45, short of the 60 necessary to move ahead

**Johns Hopkins  
Public Health Online:  
The Food Issue**

In the Food Issue you'll discover who eats what and how much; how food is grown, harvested, processed and packaged; and how all this affects human health. From micronutrients to the global food system, see how researchers and practitioners investigate the science of food and serve up solutions for public health issues that range from famine and factory farming to folate intake.



on the legislation sponsored by Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y... The Pentagon's leadership vigorously opposed the measure, arguing that officers should have more responsibility, not less, for the conduct of the men and women they lead. Proponents of the bill insisted that far-reaching changes in the Uniform Code of Military Justice are necessary to curb a scourge of rapes and sexual assaults. [ABC News](#)

## Suicide in the military: Army-NIH funded study points to risk and protective factors

3 March - The largest study of mental health risk and resilience ever conducted among U.S. military personnel today released its first findings related to suicide attempts and deaths in a series of three JAMA Psychiatry articles. Findings from The Army Study to Assess Risk and Resilience in Servicemembers (Army STARRS) include: the rise in suicide deaths from 2004 to 2009 occurred not only in currently and previously deployed soldiers, but also among soldiers never deployed; nearly half of soldiers who reported suicide attempts indicated their first attempt was prior to enlistment; and soldiers reported higher rates of certain mental disorders than civilians, including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), intermittent explosive disorder (recurrent episodes of extreme anger or violence), and substance use disorder. [NIH](#)

## Urinary tract infections, active component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2000–2013

February 2014 - ... During the 14-year surveillance period, 30.4 percent of females and 3.5 percent of males who served in the active component had a least one UTI diagnosed during a medical encounter. The incidence rate of first-time UTIs was 70.4 per 1,000 person-years (p-yrs) among females and 7.2 per 1,000 p-yrs among males. Among those who received a diagnosis of UTI, 41.3 percent of females and 13.0 percent of males had recurrences. Rates of UTIs were highest among the youngest age group among females and the youngest and oldest age groups among males. Service members in armor/motor transport occupations in both genders had the greatest incidence rates of UTI compared to other occupations while pilots and air crew had the lowest incidence rates. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

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## Year with *That Guy* Series

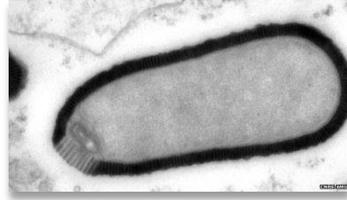
You know what it's like being out with *That Guy* – you're either cleaning up his mess, stopping his fight, paying for his tab...the list goes on! Check out the NEW monthly poster series that depicts what it's like being with *That Guy* or *That Girl* every month of the year.

[Order here](#)



## GLOBAL

### 30,000-year-old giant virus 'comes back to life'



3 March - An ancient virus has "come back to life" after lying dormant for at least 30,000 years, scientists say. It was found frozen in a deep layer of the Siberian permafrost, but after it thawed it became infectious once again. The French scientists say the contagion poses no danger to humans or animals, but other viruses could be unleashed as the ground becomes exposed. The study is published in the [Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences \(PNAS\)](#). [BBC News](#)

### Climate change could mean more malaria in Africa, South America

6 March - Future global warming could lead to a significant increase in malaria cases in densely populated regions of Africa and South America unless disease monitoring and control efforts are increased, researchers said on Thursday. In a study of the mosquito-borne disease that infects around 220 million people a year, researchers from Britain and the United States found what they describe as the first hard evidence that malaria creeps to higher elevations during warmer years and back down to lower altitudes when temperatures cool. This in turn "suggests that with progressive global warming, malaria will creep up the mountains and spread to new high-altitude areas," said Menno Bouma, an honorary clinical lecturer at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM). And because people who live in these areas have no protective immunity because they are not used to being exposed to malaria, they will be particularly vulnerable to more severe and fatal cases of infection, he added. [Reuters](#)

### Drug that harnesses body's own immune system produces lasting remissions for melanoma patients

3 March - A drug that uses the body's own immune system to kill cancer cells has produced lasting remissions - some as long as two years - in patients with melanoma that had spread to other parts of the body, according to data published on Monday. Follow-up from an early-stage, 107-patient trial of the drug, Bristol-Myers Squibb's nivolumab, found that a year after treatment, 62 percent of patients were alive. After two years, 43 percent were alive. Patients with advanced melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, have a median life expectancy of around a year. [Huffington Post](#)

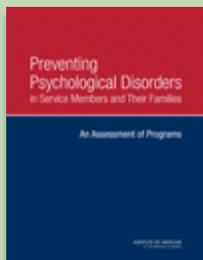
### Experimental drug protects macaques against Marburg

5 March - Scientists have shown for the first time that a small-molecule drug candidate protects nonhuman primates from the Marburg virus, according to a study in *Nature*.

## Preventing Psychological Disorders in Service Members and Their Families: An Assessment of Programs

Between 2000 and 2011, almost 1 million service members or former service members were diagnosed with at least 1 psychological disorder either during or after deployment; almost half of these members had multiple disorders.

DOD asked the IOM to conduct a study on DOD's efforts to prevent psychological disorders among active-duty service members and their families. The resulting report assesses the evidence base for DOD's existing prevention programs and makes recommendations about program development and implementation.



Researchers from the US Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID) and their industry partners found that the experimental agent BCX4430 protected cynomolgous macaques from Marburg virus infection when administered by injection as long as 2 days after infection. They further noted that BCX4430, a synthetic adenosine analogue, protected mice against both Ebola and Rift Valley fever viruses, two additional filoviruses. Also, the drug candidate protected guinea pigs exposed to Marburg virus either by injection or by inhalation, with the drug protecting in the latter situation even when given 3 days after infection. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (fourth item)

## Global diets growing similar



3 March - Around the world, our plates are looking more and more the same, according to a new [study](#). Several crops have risen to dominate global food supplies. That's good news and bad, the study says. National food supplies have become less dependent on a single crop. But today's globalized diet centers

around just a handful of crops, which the researchers say raises food security concerns. And, the study notes, some of the world-conquering crops are key ingredients in unhealthy diets. [VOA](#)

## Injections providing protection against AIDS in monkeys, studies find

4 March - Researchers are reporting that injections of long-lasting AIDS drugs protected monkeys for weeks against infection, a finding that could lead to a major breakthrough in preventing the disease in humans. Two studies by different laboratory groups each found 100 percent protection in monkeys that got monthly injections of antiretroviral drugs, and there was evidence that a single shot every three months might work just as well. If the findings can be replicated in humans, they have the potential to overcome a major problem in AIDS prevention: that many people fail to take their antiretroviral pills regularly. [New York Times](#)

## Killing pain: Parsing pain script by script

27 February - Primary care doctors wrote about 53 million benzodiazepine prescriptions in 2013, roughly four times the number written by psychiatrists, a group that penned 13 million benzo scripts. Nurse practitioners and physician assistants were close behind with 11 million prescriptions for the drugs, according to data obtained by [MedPage Today](#) and the [Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#). In 2013, non-doctors wrote 30 million opioid prescriptions, compared with 92 million written by primary care doctors that year, according to data provided by IMS Health, a drug market research firm.

[MedPage Today](#)

## 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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## Parents' fight against sepsis reaches C.D.C.

4 March - ...Sepsis is what happens when the body's own responses to an infection spin out of control, destroying cells and blood vessels. This leads to shock, organ failure and death. The sooner treatment begins, the better the chances of survival. That and many other aspects of sepsis remain poorly understood. After a campaign by [Ciaran and Orlaith Staunton], the New York State Department of Health issued new regulations, which went into effect at the end of 2013, requiring hospitals to adopt techniques for early identification and treatment of sepsis. They are among the most rigorous regulations in the country... They met with [Dr. Thomas Frieden, who as director of the centers is one of the nation's top public health officials.]... The agency is going to create a web page on sepsis, and consult with research centers and with New York State on the results of regulations, Abbigail Tumpey, a spokeswoman for the centers, said. "We haven't been there on sepsis, and we're going to continue to improve." [New York Times](#)

## These 5 countries provide the best health care in the world

20 February - InternationalLiving.com's annual Global Retirement Index reports that France, Uruguay and Malaysia provide the best and most affordable health care in the world. The Health Care category in the Index considers the cost of care and the quality. Also considered are the number of people per doctor, the number of hospital beds per 1,000 people, the percentage of the population with access to safe water, the infant mortality rate, life expectancy, and public-health expenditure as a percentage of a country's GDP... Costa Rica's excellent and affordable health care is largely the result of government investment in the health sector, plus an atmosphere of political stability... Mexico's affordable and top-notch health care is a huge benefit to living there. Pretty much across the board, health care in Mexico costs a quarter to a half of what you would pay in the U.S. [Huffington Post](#)

## UN body criticises US states' cannabis legalisation

4 March - In a new report, the International Narcotics Control Board urged the US federal government to ensure anti-drug treaties were "fully implemented on the entirety of its territory". It also said Afghanistan's response to record levels of land being used to produce opium poppies was lacking. The board also warned that use of the drug ecstasy could rise in Europe. The International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) was established in the 1960s to monitor UN nations' adherence to treaties on the control of narcotic drugs... The group also had concerns over moves to change cannabis laws in Uruguay. The report noted law enforcement agencies across Europe had seen a rise in suburban cannabis operations in which ordinary homes are converted to secret indoor farms. [BBC News](#)

## WHO: Daily sugar intake 'should be halved'

5 March - People will be advised to halve the amount of sugar in their diet, under new World Health Organization guidance. The recommended sugar intake will stay at below 10% of total calorie intake a day, with 5% the target, says the WHO. The suggested limits apply to all sugars added to food, as well as sugar naturally present in honey, syrups, fruit juices and fruit concentrates... It works out at about 50g a day for an adult of normal weight, said the WHO. [BBC News](#)

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## INFLUENZA

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

28 February:

NORTHCOM: During week 08, the percent of outpatient encounters due to ILI is above baseline for service members and dependents.

CENTCOM: The percent of outpatient encounters due to ILI and P&I continued to decrease in week 08.

EUCOM: P&I activity increased among those vaccinated. The percent of outpatient encounters due to ILI and P&I increased.

PACOM: ILI activity decreased in week 08. P&I activity decreased among vaccinated, but rose among unvaccinated service members. [AFHSC DoD Influenza Surveillance Summary](#)

### CDC: Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 8 (February 16-22, 2014), influenza activity decreased, but remained elevated in the United States.

- **Viral Surveillance:** Of 6,813 specimens tested and reported during week 8, 738 (10.8%) were positive for influenza.
- **Pneumonia and Influenza Mortality:** The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza (P&I) was above the epidemic threshold.
- **Influenza-Associated Pediatric Deaths:** Nine influenza-associated pediatric deaths were reported.
- **Influenza-associated Hospitalizations:** A season-cumulative rate of 27.4 laboratory-confirmed influenza-associated hospitalizations per 100,000 population was reported.

- Outpatient Illness Surveillance: The proportion of outpatient visits for influenza-like illness (ILI) was 2.3%, above the national baseline of 2.0%. [FluView](#)

## DoD Global Laboratory-Based Influenza Surveillance Program

- During Weeks 8 & 9 (16 February - 1 March 2014), a total of 183 specimens were collected and received from 47 locations. Results were finalized for 62 specimens from 34 locations. For specimens collected during Week 8, there were 24 influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, seven influenza A(H3N2), and five influenza B identified. For specimens collected during Week 9, there were 12 influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, one influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 & parainfluenza, two influenza A(H3N2), and one influenza A/not subtyped identified.
- Cumulative results were finalized for 2,559 specimens from 82 locations. There were 949 specimens positive for influenza A (867 A(H1N1)pdm09, 67 A(H3N2), one A(H1N1)pdm09 & adenovirus, one A(H1N1)pdm09 & coronavirus, two A(H1N1)pdm09 & parainfluenza, one A(H1N1)pdm09 & RSV, two A(H1N1)pdm09 & rhinovirus/enterovirus, and eight A/not subtyped). There were 35 specimens positive for influenza B (31 B/unknown lineage, and four B/Yamagata). Other respiratory pathogens identified were 55 adenovirus, 27 *Chlamydomphila pneumoniae*, 123 coronavirus, 56 human metapneumovirus, 39 *Mycoplasma pneumoniae*, 59 parainfluenza, 135 RSV, and 266 rhinovirus/enterovirus. To date, 100 non-influenza co-infections have been identified. [USAF School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

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

For week 8/2014 (17–23 Feb 2014):

- Of the 27 countries providing clinical data, Finland and Greece reported high-intensity influenza activity, ten reported medium intensity and 15 countries reported low-intensity influenza activity.
- Of the 1 355 sentinel specimens tested across 25 countries, 441 (33%) were positive for influenza virus.
- Seven countries reported 213 hospitalised, laboratory-confirmed influenza cases, including 112 cases admitted to intensive care units (ICU).

Based on the various indicators for the influenza season, the status of the season varied considerably between EU/EEA Member States in respect to the phase of the epidemic, its intensity, and dominant subtype. [Weekly Influenza Surveillance Overview](#)

## Impact of requiring influenza vaccination for children in licensed child care or preschool programs — Connecticut, 2012–13 influenza season

7 March - ... To evaluate the impact of this regulation on vaccination levels and influenza-associated hospitalizations during the 2012–13 influenza season, vaccination data from U.S. and Connecticut surveys and the Emerging Infections Program (EIP) were analyzed. After the regulation took effect, vaccination rates among Connecticut children aged 6–59 months increased from 67.8% during the 2009–10 influenza season to 84.1% during the 2012–13 season. During the 2012–13 influenza season, among all 11 EIP surveillance sites, Connecticut had the greatest percentage decrease (12%) in the influenza-associated hospitalization rate from 2007–08 among children aged  $\leq 4$  years. Additionally, the ratio of the influenza-associated hospitalization rates among children aged  $\leq 4$  years to the overall population rate (0.53) was lower than for any other EIP site. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

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

For Week 8 (through 22 February 2014):

### Influenza

- Three cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza (one untyped and two A/H1N1) among US military basic trainees.
- Increased influenza B and H3N2 activity among civilians in California near US-Mexico border

FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were at or below expected values. [NHRC Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update](#)

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

For the week ending February 2014 (Week 8):

- The number of specimens testing positive for Influenza A continued to decline in week 8. All regions, except ERM and PRM, have shown declining trends from peaks earlier in the influenza season.
- ILI Activity: Army incident ILI outpatient visits in week 8 were unavailable due to ESSENCE system outage.
- Influenza cases: Five hospitalized influenza cases have been reported to USAPHC through DRSi in week eight. To date, 91 cases have been reported during this influenza season: 21 in Active Duty (AD) Service Members (SMs) and 70 in non-AD beneficiaries.
- Viral specimens: During week 8, 339 of 1,190 (28%) laboratory specimens tested

positive for respiratory pathogens. The most influenza A positive specimens were reported from CENTCOM (35%), while PRMC and SRMC accounted for 20% and 17%, respectively. [USAPHC U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report](#)

## PANDEMIC AND AVIAN INFLUENZA

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

5 March - On 4 March 2014, the National Health and Family Planning Commission (NHFPC) of China notified WHO of an additional laboratory-confirmed case of human infection with avian influenza A(H7N9) virus. [WHO](#)

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## VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

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### Commissaries taking part in Hot Pocket recall

20 February - The Defense Commissary Agency is taking part in a recall on some Nestlé Hot Pocket flavors due to a contaminated beef source used in the products... Commissaries did stock some of the infected product, and officials are working with all stores to get it removed as quickly as possible, Chris Wicker, public health adviser for the DeCA, said in the release. [Stars and Stripes](#)

### *Listeria*, *Vibrio* top list of deadliest foodborne pathogens

5 March - In terms of quality-adjusted life years (QALYs) lost per illness, *Listeria monocytogenes* and *Vibrio vulnificus* far and away top the list of deadliest foodborne pathogens, according to a new study in *Foodborne Pathogens and Disease*. University of Florida and US Department of Agriculture researchers studied 14 of the commonest US foodborne pathogens and ranked them by QALYs, which they say "provide a means of comparing relative risk from diverse health outcomes." *L. monocytogenes* and *V. vulnificus* both were associated with more than 5,800 QALYs lost per 1,000 cases. That ranked far worse than the next pathogens on the list, with 125 QALYs lost per 1,000 cases for *Toxoplasma gondii*, 26 for *Escherichia coli* O157:H7, 16 for both *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter*, and 14 for *Yersinia enterocolitica*. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (third item)

## Outbreak of brucellosis spreads to more than 60 farms in occupied north Cyprus

4 March – An outbreak of brucellosis amongst populations of livestock all over Turkish occupied northern Cyprus is now rapidly developing, because there is no money in the “budget” for fighting against it, reports Turkish Cypriot media. Brucellosis is a highly contagious zoonosis caused by ingestion of unsterilized milk or meat from infected animals or close contact with their secretions... The chairman of the union of livestock producers, Mustafa Naimoglugulari confirmed that the brucellosis microbe has been discovered at sixty farms and criticized the authorities for not launching a fight against the disease. [Famagusta Gazette](#)

## U.S.: Chicken *Salmonella* outbreak persists, sickens 51 more

4 March - A chicken-related Salmonella outbreak that health officials thought had gone away has come back to haunt consumers again, affecting 51 more people in the past month and a half, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced today. The year-old outbreak, with Foster Farms brand chicken as the likely source, has expanded to 481 cases in 25 states and Puerto Rico, the CDC said today. That's up from 430 cases on Jan 16. [CIDRAP](#)

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### WELLNESS

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## Angry people 'risking heart attacks'



3 March - Having a hot temper may increase your risk of having a heart attack or stroke, according to researchers. Rage often precedes an attack and may be the trigger, say the US researchers who trawled medical literature. They identified a dangerous period of about two hours following an outburst when people were at heightened risk. But they say more work is needed to understand the link and find out if stress-busting strategies could avoid such complications. [BBC News](#)

## E-cigarettes, by other names, lure young and worry experts

4 March – Olivia Zacks, 17, recently took a drag of peach-flavored vapor from a device that most people would call an e-cigarette. But Ms. Zacks, a high school senior, does not

call it that. In fact, she insists she has never even tried an e-cigarette. Like many teenagers, Ms. Zacks calls such products “hookah pens” or “e-hookahs” or “vape pipes.” These devices are part of a subgenre of the fast-growing e-cigarette market and are being shrewdly marketed to avoid the stigma associated with cigarettes of any kind. The products, which are exploding in popularity, come in a rainbow of colors and candy-sweet flavors but, beneath the surface, they are often virtually identical to e-cigarettes, right down to their addictive nicotine and unregulated swirl of other chemicals. [New York Times](#)

## Eating too much meat and eggs is ‘just as bad as smoking’, claim scientists

4 March - Middle-aged people who eat protein-rich food are four times more likely to die of cancer than someone who only eats a little, according to a new study. Middle-aged people who eat protein-rich food are four times more likely to die of cancer than someone who only eats a little, according to a new study. The researchers said eating a lot of protein increased the risk of cancer almost as much as smoking 20 cigarettes a day. They reached their findings, published in the journal *Cell: Metabolism*, after tracking thousands of people over 20 years. [Independent](#)

## How fat may hurt the brain, and how exercise may help

5 March - Obesity may have harmful effects on the brain, and exercise may counteract many of those negative effects, according to sophisticated new neurological experiments with mice, even when the animals do not lose much weight... Past experiments with lab rodents, for instance, have shown that obese animals display poor memory and learning skills compared to their normal-weight peers... [R]ecent disquieting studies in animals indicate that obesity weakens [the protective blood-brain] barrier, leaving it leaky and permeable. In obese animals, substances released by fat cells can ooze past the barrier and into the brain... [A]s interleukin 1 migrated to the head, it passed the blood-brain barrier and entered areas such as the hippocampus, a part of the brain critical for learning and memory. There, it essentially gummed up the works, the researchers found when they examined tissue from the animals’ brains. The researchers also noted extremely low levels in these mice brains of a biochemical associated with healthy synapse function. [New York Times](#)

## Is breast-feeding really better?

4 March - ...[A] new study suggests that many of the long-term benefits attributed to breast-feeding may be an effect not of breast-feeding or breast milk itself but of the general good health and prosperity of women who choose to breast-feed. Researchers at Ohio State University compared 1,773 sibling pairs, one of whom had been breast-fed and one bottle-fed, on 11 measures of health and intellectual competency... The researchers recorded various health and behavioral outcomes in the sibling pairs, including body mass index, obesity, asthma, hyperactivity, reading comprehension, math

ability and memory-based intelligence. The study... found no statistically significant differences between the breast-fed and bottle-fed siblings on any of these measures.

[New York Times](#)

## Sleep quality linked with brain's gray matter

3 March - Poor sleep quality is associated with brain changes in the form of reduced gray matter in the frontal lobe, according to a new study of Gulf War vets. The findings are especially important given the frontal lobe plays an important role in controlling working memory and executive functioning, researchers said. The study, published in the journal [Sleep](#), is based on sleep and brain imaging data from 144 Gulf War veterans and was conducted by researchers at the University of California, San Francisco... Even after taking into account factors such as PTSD, psychotropic medication use, depression and Gulf War Illness, researchers found an association between poor quality sleep and decreased regional frontal lobe and total cortical gray matter volume. [Huffington Post](#)

## The breast cancer racial gap

3 March - A troubling racial divide in breast cancer mortality continues to widen in most major cities around the country, suggesting that advances in diagnosis and treatment continue to bypass African-American women, according to new research. An analysis of breast cancer mortality trends in 41 of the largest cities in the United States shows that the chance of surviving breast cancer correlates strongly with the color of a woman's skin. Black women with breast cancer... are on average about 40 percent more likely to die of the disease than white women with breast cancer... The researchers said the difference is explained by lower access to screening, lower-quality screening, less access to treatment and lower-quality treatment among black women. [New York Times](#)

## U.S. FDA proposes updates to nutrition facts label on food packages

27 February - The U.S. Food and Drug Administration today proposed to update the Nutrition Facts label for packaged foods to reflect the latest scientific information, including the link between diet and chronic diseases such as obesity and heart disease. The proposed label also would replace out-of-date serving sizes to better align with how much people really eat, and it would feature a fresh design to highlight key parts of the label such as calories and serving sizes. [FDA](#)

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## South Sudan: Worsening food crisis in South Sudan's swamplands

3 March- In the vast swamplands of South Sudan's Sudd region, tens of thousands of recently displaced people (IDPs) are living with little food and no sanitation facilities on inaccessible islands, according to local officials. They fled after attackers, allegedly from Rumbek (Lakes State in central South Sudan), swarmed across the county burning houses and raiding cattle on 7 February. Flying over the county headquarters of Panyjiar in southern Unity State, at least half of the houses appear to have been burned to the ground. The IDPs on the islands need food, but for now there is no way to reach them. "If you don't have a canoe, you can't go there," said Simon Kuol, coordinator of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission of Panyjiar County. [IRIN](#)

## Zimbabwe: Typhoid outbreak hits Harare's Mabvuku

2 March – As critical running water shortages continue in Harare despite abundant rains, the poor neighbourhood of Mabvuku in the capital has been hit by a typhoid outbreak, the Combined Harare Residents Association has said. In a statement at the weekend, CHRA said there had been nine confirmed cases to date. "A typhoid outbreak has hit Mabvuku high density suburb with at least nine cases confirmed so far. The suburb, which has been prone to typhoid outbreaks on a yearly basis, especially during the rainy season, has gone for four months without water supplies," the lobby group said... Mabvuku and its twin suburb of Tafara have suffered water supply problems for decades despite promises from authorities to rectify the situation. [New Zimbabwe](#)

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## Afghanistan : Ambitious U.S. hospital project in Afghanistan faces failure

5 March - An ambitious U.S.-funded project to build hospitals in Afghanistan has run into the ground, with the largest hospital ever planned in the country unlikely to open in full, U.S. and Afghan officials said. The \$60 million project by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) started in 2008 and aimed to meet the medical needs of over two million Afghans by 2009. Five years on, not one of the healthcare centers built under the project is open. The biggest, 100-bed hospital in eastern Paktia province is unfinished and may never open, according to Reuters interviews with U.S.

and Afghan officials. Paktia public health director Baz Mohammad Shirzad said even if completed, the new facility is far too big for the local authorities to handle because there were not enough doctors and other staff to operate such a big hospital. [Chicago Tribune](#)

## Syria: New clashes in blockaded area of Syrian capital halt aid to thousands, UN and activists say



3 March - Food deliveries to thousands of people living in a blockaded area in southern Damascus ground to a halt after a truce collapsed and clashes broke out between Syrian rebels and forces loyal to the government, a U.N. official and activists said on Monday... Activists estimate that over 100 people have died of hunger or hunger-

related illnesses since a blockade began nearly a year ago, preventing food and medical aid from entering Yarmouk. The halt in the food distribution in Yarmouk also underscores problems that bedevil a Feb. 22 U.N. Security Council resolution that called on warring parties to facilitate food and aid deliveries to Syrians in need. [U.S. News and World Report](#)

## Saudi Arabia: Saudi Arabia reports two MERS cases, one fatal

5 March - Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Health (MOH) announced two new Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infections today, one of them fatal. Few details were available about the patients, according to a statement in Arabic posted on the MOH Web site. Both of them are from Riyadh. One is a 55-year-old man with a chronic health condition who died from his infection, and the other is a 51-year-old man who also suffers from an underlying condition and is hospitalized in an intensive care unit... The two new cases bump Saudi Arabia's MERS total to 150 cases, of which 62 were fatal. The country has by far the most cases of any nation reporting infections. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

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## France: French slow to embrace anti-smoking policies

6 March - Smoking was banned in restaurants and al fresco eating became all the rage. It was banned in offices, and business started getting done in huddles on the sidewalk. The French, legend had it, were more likely to give up having affairs than stub out their

smoking habit. Consumption of alcohol has been falling steadily for years. Waistlines are trimmer than anywhere else in the western world and armies of joggers pound the nation's pavements every weekend. Yet paradoxically one of the most health-conscious nations on the planet has long appeared indifferent to the implications of smoking, a habit that kills 200 French people prematurely every day. Almost uniquely for a developed country, the proportion of adults who regularly smoke actually went up in the three years after a comprehensive ban on smoking in workplaces and other enclosed public spaces was introduced (in 2007). [Health24](#)

## United Kingdom: Mental health of UK troops 'relatively resilient'

26 February - UK troops who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan are coping better than US peers in terms of mental health, King's College London researchers say. Measures taken by the UK are helping troops cope with the psychological impact of trauma, according to a review of 34 studies on its armed forces. However, some groups, like reservists, remain at greater risk of mental health problems, the study found. Alcohol misuse and violence are also areas of concern. Researchers at the King's Centre for Military Health Research analysed 34 published studies on the psychological impact on the UK armed forces of deployment to areas such as Iraq and Afghanistan. [BBC News](#)

## United Kingdom: Saturated fat is not bad for health, says heart expert

6 March - NHS guidelines which advise cutting down on high fat foods like butter, cream and chocolate may be putting the public at risk and should be urgently revised, a leading heart scientist has warned. Diets that are low in saturated fat do not lower cholesterol, prevent heart disease or help people live longer, Dr James DiNicolantonio insists. He is so concerned about misinterpretation of 'flawed data' that he has called for a new public health campaign to admit 'we got it wrong.' British health experts and nutritionists backed his comments claiming that for too long 'uncomfortable facts' have been stifled by 'dietary dogma.' [Telegraph](#)

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## U.S.: Alzheimer's deaths much more common than realized

5 March - Nearly half a million elderly Americans likely died from Alzheimer's disease in 2010, a figure almost six times higher than previous estimates of annual deaths, according to a new study released on Wednesday. The Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention has estimated that approximately 5 million people are living with Alzheimer's disease in the United States, and that 83,000 die from the condition each year... [Researchers] analyzed data from two existing studies that followed people age 65 and older, starting at a time when they did not have Alzheimer's. The participants were tracked for an average of eight years, with annual checkups and brain donation in the case of death... People diagnosed with Alzheimer's were more than three times as likely to die as those without it. The risk was more than four times as high among participants aged 75 to 84. [Reuters](#)

## **U.S.: Fort Detrick - building site groundwater polluted**

6 March - The Army says it has found unsafe levels of groundwater pollution on private property where a developer wants to build more than 700 homes near a Fort Detrick Superfund site. Early sampling of water beneath a 92-acre site owned by Waverly View Investors LLC detected the solvent trichloroethylene, or TCE, at levels above the maximum allowed for drinking water about 100 feet from the Army's property line, said Joseph Gortva, Fort Detrick's restoration manager... Gortva called the finding a preliminary observation based on sampling from one well. He said a second well on the property showed no TCE and a third detected the compound at an allowable level. [Seattle Post-Intelligencer](#)

## **U.S.: Groups sue EPA to force it to move on pesticide disclosures**

5 March - Three environmental and public health groups sued the Environmental Protection Agency on Wednesday, seeking to press it to move forward with rules that would require public disclosure of certain pesticide ingredients... The groups claimed there has been an "unreasonable delay" on the EPA's part in finalizing rules to require chemical manufacturers to disclose hazardous inert ingredients in their pesticide products. The groups said there are more than 350 inert pesticide ingredients that can be just as hazardous as active ingredients that are labeled and can comprise up to 99 percent of a pesticide's formulation. Of the common inert ingredients, many are classified as carcinogenic, possibly carcinogenic or potentially toxic, the lawsuit said. More than 20 public health groups and a coalition of state attorneys general petitioned EPA in 2006 to take action on this issue. EPA said in 2009 that it was starting the rule-making process regarding disclosures of such ingredients. [Reuters](#)

## **U.S.: Nearly 3 million Americans living with hepatitis C**

3 March - More than 2.7 million Americans are currently infected with liver-damaging hepatitis C, federal officials say, and one expert believes that number could be even higher. These individuals are at much higher risk for liver disease, liver cancer and other chronic health issues, experts note. And although there are treatments available that can rid the body of the virus, many Americans remain unaware that they are even infected, according to researchers from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [Philly.com](#)

## U.S.: New U.S. fuel standards aim to cut asthma, heart attacks

3 March - The Obama administration on Monday announced new fuel and automobile rules to cut soot, smog and toxic emissions, which it says will reduce asthma and heart attacks in the United States. The so-called Tier 3 rules unveiled by the Environmental Protection Agency have been under development since President Barack Obama issued a memorandum instructing the agency to develop them in 2010. The rules, the third tier in a series of standards, will cut gasoline sulfur levels by more than 60 percent and should also reduce tailpipe and evaporative emissions from cars, light and medium-duty trucks and some heavy-duty vehicles. Health advocates praised the move, while a petroleum warned of potential supply disruptions. [VOA](#)

## U.S.: Prevalence of allergies the same, regardless of where you live



4 March - In the largest, most comprehensive, nationwide study to examine the prevalence of allergies from early childhood to old age, scientists from the National Institutes of Health report that allergy prevalence is the same across different regions of the United States, except in children 5 years and younger. "Before this study, if you would have asked 10 allergy specialists if allergy prevalence varied depending on where people live, all 10 of them would have said yes, because allergen exposures tend to be more common in certain regions of the U.S.," said Darryl Zeldin, M.D., scientific director of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), part of NIH. "This study suggests that people prone to developing allergies are going to develop an allergy to whatever is in their environment. It's what people become allergic to that differs. [NIH](#)

## U.S.: Washington state issues first pot-growing license

5 March - Marijuana regulators issued Washington state's first business license for recreational cannabis on Wednesday to a grower who said he expects to have blooming pot plants ready to harvest within eight weeks. Washington state and Colorado residents alike voted to legalize personal possession and consumption of marijuana for adults in 2012... The U.S. government still classifies marijuana as an illegal narcotic, though the Obama administration issued guidelines in August giving states new leeway to experiment with legalized cannabis. [Reuters](#)

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## Malaysia: Dengue deaths soar



4 March - Reeling from a severe dengue outbreak, Malaysia has launched a community-driven neighborhood cleaning program to destroy breeding sites of Aedes mosquitoes that are responsible for spreading the virus... Reported dengue cases rose to 18,047, while 38 people have died in Malaysia so far this year. According to

government data, in the same period last year, there were 4,250 cases of which eight were fatal. [Wall Street Journal](#)

## Zika virus outbreak in the Pacific update

28 February - In French Polynesia, 61 new suspected cases were recorded during the last week bringing the number of suspected cases to 8,503. One additional case of Guillain-Barré syndrome has been reported since the last update. There have been 74 cases of neurological and auto-immune complications of which 41 cases were Guillain-Barré syndrome. The outbreak is declining in the majority of the islands. In New Caledonia, an additional 73 autochthonous cases of Zika virus (ZIKAV) infection were reported during the last week. As of 26 February 2014, 140 confirmed cases have been reported, of which 32 are imported cases. [Global Dispatch](#)

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## Caribbean chikungunya cases may now top 10,000

3 March- The Caribbean now has 10,476 confirmed, probable, or suspected cases of chikungunya, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) said late last week, up from 6,540 the week before. Martinique continues to have the most cases in the first known chikungunya outbreak in the Americas, which began on St. Martin in December 2013. The island nation of about 400,000 inhabitants has 3,940 suspected and 1,058 confirmed or probable cases, the ECDC said. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

## El Salvador: Authorities seek to eradicate drug use in schools

4 March- Preventing drug use at an early age is the goal of the Drug Prevention Program carried out by the Counter-Narcotics Division (DAN) of the National Civil Police.

Developed in conjunction with the Attorney General's Office, the National Anti-Drug Council, the Ministry of Education (MINED) and the country's 14 departmental governments, the plan seeks to help students understand the risks of drug use. "Unfortunately, every year there's an increase in the number of drug arrests ... among young people. That's why we developed this prevention plan," DAN Deputy Commissioner Francisco Gómez said. The program, which began in January 2013 at five San Salvador schools – three public and two private – consists of talks to students, awareness campaigns about the risks and health effects of drug use and the legal problems caused by drug use and possession. [InfoSurHoy](#)

## Haiti: Senior UN expert calls for Haiti cholera compensation

2 March - A UN-appointed expert has publicly disagreed with the world body and called for "full compensation" for the victims of a cholera epidemic in Haiti. Gustavo Gallon also said in his report that "those responsible" for the outbreak should be punished. Mr Gallon is a UN-appointed expert on human rights in Haiti. Evidence suggests UN peacekeepers introduced cholera to Haiti in 2010, but the world body has rejected compensation claims. The outbreak - which has killed more than 8,300 people and infected hundreds of thousands - has been blamed on leaking sewage pipes at a UN base. The UN has never acknowledged responsibility for the epidemic, arguing that it is impossible to pinpoint the exact source of the disease. [BBC News](#)

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

