

11 January 2019

Army Public Health Weekly Update

Army Public Health Center



U.S. Military | Global | Influenza | Veterinary/Food Safety | Wellness | Contact Us
USAFRICOM | USCENTCOM | USEUCOM | USINDOPACOM | USNORTHCOM | USSOUTHCOM

Approved for public release, distribution unlimited.

Contents

NOTE:

If you are viewing the Army Public Health Weekly Update using Internet Explorer on a government computer with Windows 10, the external hyperlinks will be disabled per the [Security Technical Implementation Guide](#) (V-64927).

As a workaround, opening the Update using **Chrome** will enable the links.

We're sorry for the inconvenience.

U.S. MILITARY

- [Committee to study health effects of malaria drugs taken by U.S. troops](#)
- [Military hopes 3D printing bones can help combat veterans' injuries](#)
- [Pentagon denies US personnel saw detainee abuse in Yemen](#)
- [Promoting better understanding, treatment of traumatic brain injury](#)
- [Senators want answers on unspent VA suicide prevention funds](#)
- [Some fear groundwater near Georgia military bases is toxic](#)
- [Thyroid disorders, Active Component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2008–2017](#)
- [U.S. court rules for Trump on transgender military limits](#)

GLOBAL

- [A virus even more dangerous than Zika to pregnant woman](#)
- [Botox may help prevent migraines](#)
- [Extreme temperatures may pose risks to some mail-order meds](#)
- [Study: Pregnant women with H1N1 have more adverse birth outcomes](#)

INFLUENZA

- [AFHSB: DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary](#)
- [CDC: Flu View - Weekly U.S. Influenza Surveillance Report](#)
- [ECDC: Flu News Europe](#)
- [USAFSAM & DHA: DoD Global Respiratory Pathogen Surveillance Program](#)
- [What we know about the flu season so far: Analysis](#)
- [WHO: Influenza Update](#)

VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

- [U.S.: Multistate E.coli infection outbreak appears to be over: CDC](#)
- [Partial government shutdown is giving federal food safety a stress test](#)

WELLNESS

- [A 'meaningful' life is connected to better health, study finds. But it's complicated](#)
- [Artificial sweeteners make 'no difference' to health](#)
- [High rate of food allergies seen in U.S. adults](#)

Subscription or Comments

If you wish to be added to the APH Weekly Update mailing list, removed from the mailing list, or if you have comments or questions about the update, please [contact us](#). We welcome your comments. Please feel free to share this update with others who may be interested.



USAFRICOM

- Sierra Leone: Deadly Marburg virus found in bats in Sierra Leone

USCENTCOM

- Saudi Arabia: New case of MERS recorded in Jeddah

USEUCOM

- England: Two cases of extensively drug-resistant gonorrhea in the UK

USINDOPACOM

- China: China authorities arrest 18 at TCM firm after cancer case sparks outcry
- China: China hails improved water quality, but some rivers more polluted
- Thailand: Fears grow as measles running rampant in southern Thailand

USNORTHCOM

- Mexico: Drug-resistant infections in Mexico
- U.S.: How the federal shutdown is affecting health programs
- U.S.: Johns Hopkins, Bristol-Myers must face \$1 billion syphilis infections suit
- U.S.: Laws intended to protect firefighters who get cancer often lack teeth
- U.S.: Older people who use hearing aids still report hearing challenges
- U.S.: U.S. health care spending highest among developed countries

USSOUTHCOM

- Cuba: The sounds that haunted U.S. diplomats in Cuba? Lovelorn crickets, scientists say

U.S. MILITARY

Committee to study health effects of malaria drugs taken by U.S. troops

8 January - A National Academy of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine committee will conduct a review of the long-term health effects of an anti-malarial drug taken by U.S. troops that has been linked to brain damage and psychiatric disorders. The committee on Jan. 28 will launch an 18-month study of mefloquine, also known by its brand name, Lariam, and other malaria medications used by military personnel, Peace Corps volunteers and State Department employees over the past several decades. ... The committee plans to examine the possible long-term health consequences of taking these medications, with a special focus on mefloquine and its potential "neurological effects, long-term psychiatric effects and the potential development of post-traumatic stress disorder." [Military.com](#)

[top of page...](#)

Military hopes 3D printing bones can help combat veterans' injuries



7 January - A lab in Arizona is hoping to help wounded veterans – through 3D printing. Arizona's Orthopedic Research Lab is hoping to use the technology to help military veterans with bone injuries. Dr. John Szivek, who runs the University of Arizona Orthopedic Research Lab, said the lab

received a \$2 million grant from the Department of Defense to create 3D bone printing to help military personnel. "We could regenerate their bone by 3D printing a scaffold that's specific to that bone and that patient and then filling it with stem cells from that patient, adult stem cells," Szivek said. "Surgeons in the military would try to treat military personnel with blast injuries, in particular. Those injuries usually cause massive bone loss and unfortunately, in many cases, they're currently amputating military personnel who have those types of injuries. But in this way, they could regrow the bone for that person and they could continue their service in the military." [Fox News](#)

[top of page...](#)

Pentagon denies US personnel saw detainee abuse in Yemen

8 January - The Pentagon has denied in a report to Congress that U.S. personnel in Yemen who interrogated Yemeni detainees for information about potential terrorist threats had witnessed or were complicit in torture or other mistreatment of any detainee. The report, which has not been publicly released, was required by Congress in the 2019 defense bill following a series of reports by The Associated Press and human rights groups of sexual abuse and other mistreatment of Yemenis in prisons overseen by the United Arab Emirates — a key U.S. ally in the Middle East — and militias backed by the UAE. [Military Times](#)

[top of page...](#)

Promoting better understanding, treatment of traumatic brain injury

26 December - Traumatic brain injuries continue to be a top focus in the Defense Health Agency. According to the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center, or DVVIC, more than 380,000 service members have been diagnosed with a TBI since 2000. The majority of the incidents have occurred in noncombat events including training accidents, falls, motor vehicle collisions, and sports-related activities. ... Here's a look at some activities this year that were related to promoting better understanding and treatment of TBI: The U.S. Army

Follow us!



Facebook



Twitter



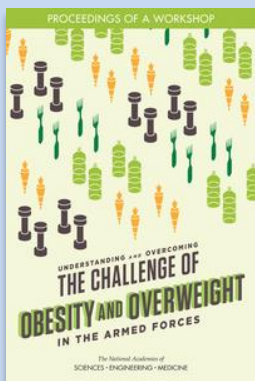
YouTube



Instagram

Understanding and Overcoming the Challenge of Obesity and Overweight in the Armed Forces: Proceedings of a Workshop

On May 7, 2018, the Roundtable on Obesity Solutions held a workshop titled "Understanding and Overcoming the Challenge of Obesity and Overweight in the Armed Forces." Speakers examined how obesity and overweight are measured in the armed forces and how they affect recruitment, retention, resilience, and readiness; discussed service-specific issues related to these problems and highlighted innovative strategies to address them through improved nutrition, physical activity, and stress management; and offered perspectives from outside of the armed forces on approaches to prevent and treat obesity.



Medical Research and Materiel Command began limited user testing of a blood test for brain trauma. ... The Air Force opened its first Invisible Wounds Center at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida. ... During this year's Military Health System Research Symposium, a researcher at Indiana University was recognized for his work advancing the biological understanding of head impacts that don't produce clinical symptoms of mTBI. [Health.mil](#)

[top of page...](#)

Senators want answers on unspent VA suicide prevention funds

4 January - A group of 21 Senate Democrats has asked the Department of Veterans Affairs to explain why it spent just \$57,000 of \$6.2 million budgeted for paid media advertising campaigns directed at suicide prevention in fiscal 2018, a deficiency they called "appalling" for its lack of oversight. The lawmakers ... demanded a full accounting of the \$17.7 million budgeted by VA for suicide prevention outreach, which includes both paid advertising such as radio spots, billboards and digital ads, as well as unpaid outreach such as public service announcements, social media and the VA's own Crisis Line website. According to the Government Accountability Office, the VA developed 47 pieces of social media content in 2018, down from 339 in 2016; failed to air any public service announcements on radio or TV for more than a year; and did not develop any new paid advertising for 2018 despite having a budget of \$6.2 million. A GAO report published in November blamed the decline in outreach on leadership turnover and reorganization within the VA. [Military.com](#)

[top of page...](#)

Some fear groundwater near Georgia military bases is toxic

6 January - Groundwater near Georgia military bases remains contaminated from a toxic firefighting foam used for decades by the U.S. Air Force, prompting fears among residents about their exposure to the chemicals. Recent tests at Georgia's three air bases show extensive environmental contamination of groundwater, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported. Environmentalists say that contamination from the foam exposed Georgia communities to chemicals linked to cancer and a variety of other health problems. The Air Force has said that Georgia's drinking water is safe for the thousands of people living around its installations. But experts and nearby residents question those findings, saying the military's review was too narrow and failed to test water off-base. [Air Force Times](#)

[top of page...](#)

Health of Refugee and Migrant Children (2018)

Between 2015 and 2017, almost one million asylum-seeking children registered in the European Union, and 200 000 of these arrived unaccompanied by a caregiver. These children faced particular risks, including being exposed to discrimination, marginalization, institutionalization and exclusion. When considering health and health care interventions for migrant children, some areas need specific attention, such as their diverse backgrounds, whether they are unaccompanied and separated from family, whether they have been trafficked and also if they are children who have



been left behind.

Thyroid disorders, Active Component, U.S. Armed Forces, 2008–2017

December 2018 - More than 40,000 cases of thyroid disorders were diagnosed during the ten-year surveillance period among active component service members. In contrast to previous findings, the current report indicates that the incidence of the five different thyroid disorders remained stable or decreased between 2008 and 2017. Although thyroid disorders are treatable, hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism can result in periods of non-deployability, temporary duty profile, or need for medical waiver at the time of diagnosis or if there is a disruption in treatment. More severe cases of hyperthyroidism can take up to 1 year to stabilize, resulting in significant periods of limited deployability.

[Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

[top of page...](#)

U.S. court rules for Trump on transgender military limits

4 January - A U.S. court on Friday ruled in favor of a Trump administration policy barring certain transgender people from serving in the U.S. armed forces, handing the president his first legal victory on the issue after several defeats. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit overturned a decision by a federal judge in Washington, D.C., that blocked the policy, saying it likely violates the constitutional rights of transgender recruits and service members. ... The appeals court victory is limited because other federal courts issued injunctions against the policy, which applied nationwide. The administration already has asked the Supreme Court to weigh in on the issue. The high court is due to consider whether to hear three separate government appeals at its private conference on Jan. 11.

[Reuters](#)

[top of page...](#)

GLOBAL

A virus even more dangerous than Zika to pregnant woman

7 January - The mosquito-borne virus that causes Rift Valley fever may severely injure human fetuses if contracted by mothers during pregnancy, according to new research. ... [R]esearchers used infected rats and human fetal tissue to discover how the virus targets the placenta. Results showed that the virus may be even more damaging to fetuses than the Zika virus. ... Rift Valley fever primarily occurs in livestock in sub-Saharan Africa, where outbreaks cause 90 to 100 percent of pregnant cows in a herd to miscarry or deliver

Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2018

The *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2018* puts the spotlight on human trafficking in armed conflict. Human trafficking is always a crime, committed with the intention to exploit; in conflict situations, characterized by violence, brutality and coercion, traffickers can operate with even greater impunity. Trafficking in armed conflict has taken on horrific dimensions – child soldiers, forced labour, sexual slavery.



stillborn calves, often a significant economic loss. But hundreds of cases also occur in humans each year, causing flulike symptoms and severe liver problems. The outbreaks have moved beyond Africa: In late 2000, an outbreak in Saudi Arabia infected more than 100,000 people and led to at least 700 deaths, according to Dr. Hartman. The mosquito that carries the disease is also found in Europe and the Americas. [The New York Times](#)

[top of page...](#)

Botox may help prevent migraines

8 January - Botox injections are approved to reduce the frequency of migraine headaches, but studies of their effectiveness have had mixed results. Now a review of studies has concluded that Botox has small but significant benefits, with few serious side effects. Researchers analyzed data from 17 studies, including 3,646 patients, that tested botulinum toxin injections against placebos. More than 86 percent of the patients were women, and 43 percent had chronic migraines, with more than 15 headache days a month. ... Treatment usually consists of 15 to 20 shots around the head and neck given once every three or four months. The pooled data showed that in comparison to a placebo, Botox injections resulted in an average 1.6 fewer attacks per month for chronic sufferers — those with more than 15 headaches a month. [The New York Times](#)

[top of page...](#)

Extreme temperatures may pose risks to some mail-order meds

7 January - ... As of 2016, prescriptions fulfilled by mail accounted for nearly a quarter of total U.S. spending on prescriptions (before rebates and discounts), according to a report from IQVIA's Institute for Human Data Science. Health insurers typically contract with companies known as pharmacy benefit managers to handle the complex process of getting medicine to patients. ... Inside an enormous OptumRX warehouse in a Kansas City suburb, lines of orange prescription bottles fly along conveyor belts, while pharmacists scan bar codes and technicians refill bins of pills. Lead pharmacist Alysia Heller explains that this shipping behemoth, which sends out as many as 100,000 prescriptions a day, includes a system to account for weather. "If there's an extreme heat situation where a product is going into 100-plus degree weather, the system will tell the technician to add an extra ice pack," Heller says, "because we've monitored the zip code and the weather in that area." But at OptumRX and across the industry, that level of temperature-controlled shipping is usually reserved only for a relatively small number of drugs — such as certain types of insulin, or hepatitis C drugs that have specific refrigeration requirements. [NPR](#)

[top of page...](#)

**The Surgeon
General Weekly
Read Book**

The Surgeon General Weekly Read Book is available with articles classified up to the **SECRET** level on the APHC SIPRNet site:

<https://intelshare.intelink.sgov.gov/sites/medcom-g2/SitePages/Home.aspx>

To access this version, you will need a **SECRET** clearance and a SIPRNet account.

Study: Pregnant women with H1N1 have more adverse birth outcomes

9 January - Pregnant women who suffered from severe H1N1 influenza the 2009 pandemic were more likely to experience adverse birth outcomes, including preterm infants, low-birth-weight infants, and infants with low Apgar scores than women who did not have influenza during pregnancy, according to a study today in Birth Defects Research. The study followed pregnancies from April to December of 2009 recorded by five state health departments across the United States. Researchers compared birth outcomes from 490 pregnant women with influenza, 1,451 women without reported influenza with pregnancies in the same year, and 1,446 pregnant women without reported influenza with prior-year pregnancies. Sixty-four women with H1N1 influenza were admitted to the intensive care unit and had an increased adjusted relative risk of 3.9 for having preterm births (before 37 weeks gestation). The adjusted relative risk for low-weight infants and infants with Apgar scores under 6 was 4.6 and 8.7, respectively. [Birth Defects Research](#)

[top of page...](#)

INFLUENZA

AFHSB: DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary

For Week 52:

- NORTHCOM: Influenza activity remained similar to last week with activity ranging from minimal to high, depending on the state. However, Massachusetts, Florida, and Texas all had high activity.
- EUCOM: Influenza activity increased from minimal to low in Germany, Italy, and Greece and was minimal for the rest of EUCOM countries with data.
- PACOM: Influenza activity remained minimal across PACOM, with the exception of the Republic of Korea, where activity increased to low.
- CENTCOM: Influenza activity ranged from minimal to moderate in CENTCOM locations with available data.
- AFRICOM: In Djibouti, influenza activity remained minimal and the percentage of outpatient visits due to ILI more than doubled to 8.7%.
- SOUTHCOM: Influenza activity was minimal in Honduras and Cuba during week 52.

[DHA -Armed Forces Health Surveillance Branch](#)

CDC: Flu View - Weekly U.S. Influenza Surveillance Report

2018-2019 Influenza Season Week 52 ending December 29, 2018: Influenza activity in the

Links

[A-Z Index](#)

[About APHC](#)

[Army Public Health
Weekly Update Archives](#)

[Medical Surveillance
Monthly Report](#)

[Health Threat Briefings
\(AKO\)](#)

[Request APHC Services](#)

[APHC Resource Materials](#)

[APHC Homepage](#)

[APHC Training](#)

[Contact APHC](#)

United States is increasing. Influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, influenza A(H3N2), and influenza B viruses continue to co-circulate.

- **Viral Surveillance:** The percentage of respiratory specimens testing positive for influenza viruses in clinical laboratories is increasing. Influenza A viruses have predominated in the United States since the beginning of October. Influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 viruses have predominated in most areas of the country, however influenza A(H3) viruses have predominated in the southeastern United States (HHS Region 4).
- **Influenza-like Illness Surveillance:** The proportion of outpatient visits for influenza-like illness (ILI) increased to 4.1%, which is above the national baseline of 2.2%. All 10 regions reported ILI at or above their region-specific baseline level. The increase in the percentage of patient visits for ILI may be influenced in part by a reduction in routine healthcare visits during the winter holidays, as has occurred during previous seasons. [CDC](#)

[top of page...](#)

ECDC: Flu News Europe

Week 52/2018 (24–30 December 2018)

- Influenza activity continued to increase in the European Region. Of the individuals sampled after presenting with ILI or ARI to sentinel primary healthcare sites, 37% tested positive for influenza viruses.
- The majority of influenza virus detections were type A in both inpatients and outpatients.
- From sentinel samples, influenza A(H3N2) and A(H1N1)pdm09 viruses were detected in similar proportions.
- From non-sentinel samples, about two third of the A viruses were A(H1N1)pdm09.
- Most of the hospitalized laboratory confirmed influenza infections were associated with A(H1N1)pdm09 virus and were in persons aged 15-64 years.
- The predominant A(H1N1)pdm09 and A(H3N2) viruses that are circulating match the vaccine components, although fewer than 50 A(H3N2) viruses have been genetically characterized and only 13 have been antigenically characterized so far.
- Data from the 13 Member States and areas reporting to the EuroMOMO project indicated all-cause mortality was at expected levels for this time of year.

[European Center for Disease Prevention and Control/WHO](#)

[top of page...](#)

USAFSAM & DHA: DoD Global Respiratory Pathogen Surveillance Program

During 16 - 29 December 2018 (Surveillance Weeks 51 & 52), a total of 337 specimens were

collected and received from 50 locations with influenza-like illness (ILI). Results were finalized for 324 specimens from 50 locations. The influenza percent positive for Weeks 51 and 52 were approximately 11% and 25%, respectively. The influenza percent positive for the season is approximately 5%.

[U.S. Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine & Defense Health Agency](#)

[top of page...](#)

What we know about the flu season so far: Analysis

7 January - ... Across the U.S., outpatient clinic visits for flu-like symptoms during the last full week of December are double what they would be during a typical week outside of flu season. Almost 6 percent of patient samples sent to the lab from Sept. 30 through December have been flu-positive, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. However, in the week preceding New Year's Eve, that figure jumped to over 13 percent. ... Influenza A (H1N1) is currently the most common strain of the flu virus in the U.S., and the 2018-2019 vaccine provides protection against this strain. The H3N2 strain, seen predominantly in the southeast, is also covered by the vaccine. ... The majority of states are experiencing low to moderate flu activity, although 19 states are seeing higher levels of flu, particularly the South and Southwest. ... [S]o far there have been 13 pediatric deaths from the flu in the 2018-2019 season. Overall deaths from flu and pneumonia, however, are not at epidemic levels this season. The current number U.S. flu deaths per week is around 40. [ABC News](#)

[top of page...](#)

WHO: Influenza Update

7 January - In the temperate zone of the northern hemisphere influenza activity continued to increase slowly.

- In North America influenza activity continued to increase overall with influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 predominating.
- In Europe, influenza activity increased, with both A viruses circulating.
- In North Africa, increased influenza A(H3N2) detections were reported from mainly Egypt.
- In Western Asia, some countries reached medium levels of influenza intensity. Elevated but decreasing influenza activity continued to be reported across countries of the Arabian Peninsula.
- In East Asia, influenza season appeared to have started, with predominantly influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 detected.
- In Southern Asia, influenza detections rose sharply in recent weeks mainly due to increased influenza A(H3N2) detections in Iran and continued influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 detections in India.
- In the temperate zones of the southern hemisphere, influenza activity returned to

inter-seasonal levels with exception of some parts in Australia. Worldwide, seasonal influenza A viruses accounted for the majority of detections. [WHO](#)

[top of page...](#)

VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

U.S.: Multistate E.coli infection outbreak appears to be over: CDC

10 January - The multistate outbreak of E. coli infections linked to romaine lettuce from the Central Coastal growing regions in northern and central California appears to be over, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said on Wednesday. Sixty-two people infected with the outbreak strain of E. coli were reported from 16 states and the District of Columbia, the CDC said in an update here on its investigation into the outbreak. The multistate outbreak of E. coli infections related to romaine lettuce led to a nationwide public health warning for consumers and was first issued by U.S. health regulators in November.

[Reuters](#)

[top of page...](#)

Partial government shutdown is giving federal food safety a stress test

8 January - The Alliance for A Stronger FDA, a non-profit organization that has been rattling the fiscal cages in Washington D.C. for more than a decade, isn't buying the line that the partial government shutdown is a "no harm, no foul" event for federal food safety. With the partial shutdown now in its 18th day, everybody's had time to think about how this all is going to play out. During the stalled budget process, three federal agencies involved in food safety are continuing key operations. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are not shut down. The USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) continues to provide uninterrupted inspection services at more than 6,200 meat and poultry facilities. And many employees at the Food and Drug Administration are not furloughed because of their essential functions, from investigations to imports. [Food Safety News](#)

[top of page...](#)

WELLNESS

A 'meaningful' life is connected to better health, study finds. But it's complicated

8 January - From the research in recent years, the psychological component of health couldn't be clearer. Among many other behaviors, people who are socially more connected, who spend time in nature, and who are more involved in their communities are generally healthier. A new study ... adds to the area, finding that people who believe their activities are more meaningful also tend to be healthier. ... People who said their activities were more meaningful also had stronger relationships, were wealthier, less likely to live alone, ate more fruits and vegetables, exercised more, slept better, spent more time socializing and volunteering, and had better mental and physical health. Scoring higher in meaningful activities wasn't just associated with self-reports of better health, but also with objective ones—these individuals had higher levels of HDL ("good") cholesterol, were thinner, walked faster, had strong hand grip strength, and lower levels of the biomarker C-reactive protein and white blood cells. [Forbes](#)

[top of page...](#)

Artificial sweeteners make 'no difference' to health

7 January - Non-sugar sweeteners have been at the center of a fierce debate for decades. Do they benefit health or increase risks? A recent study fans the flames once more, claiming that there is little evidence of benefits or harms. ... In all, the scientists assessed 56 research papers, making this the most comprehensive review of the matter to date. The studies that they analyzed included adult and child participants, and they compared low and no intake of non-sugar sweeteners against higher intakes. They investigated a range of parameters, including oral health, kidney and cardiovascular disease, cancer, blood sugar levels, behavior, mood, and, importantly, weight and body mass index (BMI). Perhaps surprisingly, for most health outcomes, there seemed to be no significant differences between people who consumed non-sugar sweeteners and those who did not. [Medical News Today](#)

[top of page...](#)

High rate of food allergies seen in U.S. adults

4 January - More than 10 percent of American adults are allergic to at least one food, a new study suggests. Among more than 40,000 adults surveyed, 10.8 percent reported the kinds of severe symptoms that are consistent with a food allergy, and another 8.2 percent said they believed they had food allergies, but their symptoms suggested other causes. [Reuters](#)

[top of page...](#)

USAFRICOM

Sierra Leone: Deadly Marburg virus found in bats in Sierra Leone

20 December - Scientists have discovered the deadly Marburg virus in fruit bats in Sierra Leone, the first time this cousin of Ebola has been found in West Africa. There have been no reported cases of people or animals with active infections. But the pathogen's presence in the bats raises the potential for it to infect humans in a new region more than a thousand miles from previously known outbreaks. There have been a dozen known Marburg virus outbreaks in other parts of Africa, most recently in Uganda in 2017. Like Ebola, Marburg virus initially infects people through contact with wild animals. It can then spread person to person through contact with bodily fluids. It kills up to 9 in 10 of its victims, sometimes within a week. [The Washington Post](#)

[top of page...](#)

USCENTCOM

Saudi Arabia: New case of MERS recorded in Jeddah

9 January - Saudi Arabia's ministry of health (MOH) reported a new MERS-CoV case today in the city of Jeddah. The notice came in an epidemiologic week 2 notification. The patient is a 75-year-old man who is hospitalized for his MERS-CoV (Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus) infection. The man did not have camel contact. The source of his infection is listed as "primary" and community acquired, meaning it is unlikely he contracted the virus from another person. The new case likely lifts on the global total since 2012 to 2,285 cases, at least 806 of them fatal. It is the fourth Saudi MERS case of 2019. The other three were in Riyadh. [Saudi Arabia Ministry of Health](#)

[top of page...](#)

USEUCOM

England: Two cases of extensively drug-resistant gonorrhoea in the UK

9 January - Public Health England (PHE) is investigating 2 cases of *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* in heterosexual females with similar resistance patterns to the antibiotics (ceftriaxone and azithromycin) that are used as the first line treatment for gonorrhoea. While this type of

resistance is unusual, there have been cases in other countries. Both cases were successfully treated and we are following up sexual contacts to minimise the risk of any onward transmission. One of these cases appears to have been acquired in Europe and the other has links to Europe but was acquired in the UK. Finding this sort of extensively drug resistant gonorrhoea in the UK serves as an important reminder of the need to practice safer sex. This includes using condoms consistently and correctly with all new and casual sexual partners. Anyone with symptoms of a sexually transmitted infection (STI) or who is concerned they may have an STI should seek advice from their sexual health clinic. [Public Health England](#)

[top of page...](#)

USINDOPACOM

China: China authorities arrest 18 at TCM firm after cancer case sparks outcry

7 January - Authorities in the Chinese port city of Tianjin had said in December that they were investigating TCM firm Quanjian Group over allegations including false marketing. The official local Tianjin Daily reported on Monday that police has arrested Quanjian founder Shu Yuhui and 17 others. The story was widely picked up by national state media. ... Quanjian, headquartered in the northeastern city of Tianjin, has been under fire after an article recounting the death of a four-year-old girl from cancer went viral on social media. The girl had received a treatment from the firm. Chinese people expressed anger over the case and shared their own experiences about how the company overstated the efficacy of its treatments. [Reuters](#)

[top of page...](#)

China: China hails improved water quality, but some rivers more polluted



7 January - China's surface water quality improved in 2018, with more samples taken from river and lakes reaching standards fit for human use, the country's environment ministry said on Monday. Beijing has extended its campaign to tackle pollution from air to water, attempting to clean up the black and stinky streams flowing through Chinese cities and improve the water quality of its natural reserves. ... Phosphorus and ammonium nitrate, which mainly come from industrial waste water, pesticides and organic fertilisers, were identified as the major pollutants of water pollution, the MEE said in a statement. [Reuters](#)

[top of page...](#)

Thailand: Fears grow as measles running rampant in southern Thailand

1 January - ... Even though it's widely accepted that the disease is close to being eradicated, here in Thailand's deep south, the virus has spread rapidly since September, affecting some 3,000 people out of the 4,000 reported cases nationwide and causing the deaths of at least 22 children. [Al Jazeera](#)

[top of page...](#)

USNORTHCOM

Mexico: Drug-resistant infections in Mexico

9 January - Recently, some US residents returning from Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico, were diagnosed with infections caused by an antibiotic-resistant form of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* bacteria.

- All of the travelers with this particular infection had an invasive medical procedure performed in Tijuana. Most (but not all) of them had weight-loss surgery. About half of those infected had their surgery done at the Grand View Hospital.
- Based on information provided by the CDC, the Mexican government has closed the Grand View Hospital until further notice.
- CDC recommends that travelers to Tijuana, Mexico, not have surgery at the Grand View Hospital until the Mexican government can confirm that the drug-resistant form of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* bacteria is no longer there. [CDC](#)

[top of page...](#)

U.S.: How the federal shutdown is affecting health programs

3 January - ... Congress has already passed five of its major appropriations bills, funding about three-fourths of the federal government, including the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Veterans Affairs. But seven bills are outstanding ... Although the Food and Drug Administration falls under the HHS umbrella, it receives significant funding for its food safety operations through the spending bill for the Department of Agriculture, which is entirely caught up in the shutdown. ... Because Congress has yet to approve funding for the Indian Health Service, which is run by HHS but gets its money through the Department of the Interior, IHS feels the full weight of the shutdown. The only services that can continue are those that meet "immediate needs of the patients, medical staff, and medical facilities," according to the shutdown contingency plan.

... The Department of Homeland Security's Office of Health Affairs assesses threats posed by infectious diseases, pandemics and biological and chemical attacks. It is supposed to be scaling back, according to the department's shutdown contingency plan. [NPR](#)

[top of page...](#)

U.S.: Johns Hopkins, Bristol-Myers must face \$1 billion syphilis infections suit

4 January - A federal judge in Maryland said The Johns Hopkins University, Bristol-Myers Squibb Co and the Rockefeller Foundation must face a \$1 billion lawsuit over their roles in a 1940s U.S. government experiment that infected hundreds of Guatemalans with syphilis. ... [U.S. District Judge Theodore] Chuang's decision is a victory for 444 victims and relatives of victims suing over the experiment, which was aimed at testing the then-new drug penicillin and stopping the spread of sexually-transmitted diseases. [Reuters](#)

[top of page...](#)

U.S.: Laws intended to protect firefighters who get cancer often lack teeth

4 January - ... Research from National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) published in 2013 shows that firefighters are diagnosed with and die from cancer at higher rates than the general population. It confirmed earlier research finding elevated risk for the profession for certain cancers. ... [A] growing number of states have passed laws — 42 states and Washington, D.C. — designed to help firefighters who develop cancer. ... Generally, these laws say that firefighters diagnosed with cancer while on the job or within a certain time after retirement are presumed to have become ill because of their work. And that should make it easier for them to get workers' compensation, disability benefits or death benefits for their families. But firefighters say those protections often fall short. Leaders of organizations that work with firefighters say, despite these laws, firefighters are often denied workers' compensation claims after a cancer diagnosis. [NPR](#)

[top of page...](#)

U.S.: Older people who use hearing aids still report hearing challenges

7 January - A high proportion of older people with hearing aids, especially those with lower incomes, report having trouble hearing and difficulty accessing hearing care services. ... The researchers, whose analysis is based on Medicare survey data ... suggest that the federal government expand Medicare and/or Medicaid coverage of hearing care services. The study

of 1,133 Medicare participants found that having a hearing aid that functioned well appeared to depend greatly on income level. Among low-income Medicare beneficiaries dually eligible for Medicaid, 27 percent of respondents reported having a lot of trouble hearing with a hearing aid. By contrast, just 11 percent of those in the highest income category—at least four times the poverty level—reported a lot of hearing-aid difficulties. [Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health News](#)

[top of page...](#)

U.S.: U.S. health care spending highest among developed countries

7 January - The United States, on a per capita basis, spends much more on health care than other developed countries; the chief reason is not greater health care utilization, but higher prices. ... The researchers determined that the higher overall health care spending in the U.S. was due mainly to higher prices -- including higher drug prices, higher salaries for doctors and nurses, higher hospital administration costs and higher prices for many medical services. The paper finds that the U.S. remains an outlier in terms of per capita health care spending, which was \$9,892 in 2016. That amount was about 25 percent higher than second-place Switzerland's \$7,919. It was also 108 percent higher than Canada's \$4,753, and 145 percent higher than the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) median of \$4,033. And it was more than double the \$4,559 the U.S. spent per capita on health care in 2000. [Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health News](#)

[top of page...](#)

USSOUTHCOM

Cuba: The sounds that haunted U.S. diplomats in Cuba? Lovelorn crickets, scientists say

4 January - In November 2016, American diplomats in Cuba complained of persistent, high-pitched sounds followed by a range of symptoms, including headaches, nausea and hearing loss. Exams of nearly two dozen of them eventually revealed signs of concussions or other brain injuries, and speculation about the cause turned to weapons that blast sound or microwaves. Amid an international uproar, a recording of the sinister droning was widely circulated in the news media. On Friday, two scientists presented evidence that those sounds were not so mysterious after all. They were made by crickets, the researchers concluded. That's not to say that the diplomats weren't attacked, the scientists added — only that the recording is not of a sonic weapon, as had been suggested.

[The New York Times](#)

[top of page...](#)

[U.S. Military](#) | [Global](#) | [Influenza](#) | [Veterinary/Food Safety](#) | [Wellness](#) | [Contact Us](#)
[USAFRICOM](#) | [USCENTCOM](#) | [USEUCOM](#) | [USINDOPACOM](#) | [USNORTHCOM](#) | [USSOUTHCOM](#)

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

The *Army Public Health Weekly Update* does not analyze the information as to its strategic or tactical impact on the U.S. Army and is not a medical intelligence product. Medical intelligence is available from the [National Center for Medical Intelligence](#).

External Links: The appearance of external hyperlinks does not constitute endorsement by the U.S. Army of the website or the information, products, or services contained therein. For other than authorized activities such as military exchanges and MWR sites, the U.S. Army does not exercise any editorial control over the information you may find at these locations. Such links are provided consistent with the stated purpose of this product.

Although we avoid links to sites that may be blocked, all sites may not be accessible from all locations. While we verify the links at the time of publication, we cannot guarantee that they will be active in the future.

The *Army Public Health Weekly Update* is published by the Public Health Communication Directorate, Army Public Health Center.

