

28 August 2015

Army Public Health Weekly Update

Army Public Health Center



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Anti-VD posters of WWII

Posters on venereal disease were created courtesy of the U.S. surgeon general, the U.S. Public Health Service and the Federal Security Agency in the early 1940s. On any given day during World War I, about 18,000 men were taken out of battle by venereal disease, and it could take a month of treatment before each man was ready to return to the front. Today, the outdated images and messages make us shudder.

Did the propaganda keep the troops from getting STDs? Here's the U.S. Army Medical Department's Office of Medical History: "It can be stated very simply that the lowest venereal disease rates in the U.S. Army occurred during 1943 and that the rates began to rise in 1944, further increased in 1945, and showed marked increases after the cessation of hostilities."



U.S. MILITARY

Army stats show that women are injured twice as often as men in combat training

26 August - Female soldiers suffered double the rate of injuries compared with male colleagues in Army combat training, including jobs in field artillery and repairing the Bradley Fighting Vehicle. The startling statistics come from Army studies obtained by the Center for Military Readiness (CMR), a research group that opposes [putting] women in the direct land combat in infantry, armor, artillery and special operations units. ... The Army turned over mounds of reports from its Medical Command and the Army Institute of Public Health. Data showed that women in the military occupational specialty (MOS) of artillery surveyor meteorological crew member suffered more than double (113 percent) the injuries of men. Women in basic combat, combat vehicle maintenance and engineers training produced the same lopsided injury ratio. [Washington Times](#)

Two in five military women endure sexual trauma during service

27 August - In the U.S. military, women may be nearly 10 times more likely than men to experience sexual assault or harassment, a study of recent veterans suggests. Researchers from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) surveyed more than 20,000 men and women who served during the conflicts in [Iraq](#) and Afghanistan. About 41 percent of women and 4 percent of men reported suffering some form of sexual harassment during their time in the military. ... "Despite the higher prevalence among women veterans, given the far greater number of men who have served in the military, there are significant numbers of both men and women who have experienced (sexual trauma)," [Shannon Barth of the VA] added. [Reuters](#)

Update: Routine screening for antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus, civilian applicants for U.S. military service and U.S. Armed Forces, Active and Reserve Components, January 2010–June 2015

August 2015 - This report contains an update through June 2015 of the results of routine screening for antibodies to the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) among civilian applicants for military service and among members of the active and reserve components of the U.S. Armed Forces. Seroprevalences among civilian applicants in 2014 and the first half of 2015 (0.21 and 0.22 per 1,000 tested, respectively) were markedly lower than in 2012 (0.28 per 1,000 tested). In nearly every component of every military service, seroprevalences in 2014 and 2015 were either lower than, or relatively similar to, prevalences in prior years; however, in the Army National Guard, seroprevalences increased each year and approximately doubled from 2010 (0.18 per 1,000 tested) to 2014–2015 (0.36–0.39 per 1,000

**Navy and Marine
Corps Public Health
Center:
Sexual Health and
Responsibility
Program Webinar**

If you missed NMCPHC's webinar on HIV PrEP in DoD or would like to use it for in-house training, the audio and slides are now available on the [webinar page](#).

Learning Objectives:

- HIV Incidence in the DoN/DoD
- Purpose of HIV PrEP and Patient Eligibility Criteria
- HIV PrEP Clinical Practice Guidelines and Resources
- Medication Accessibility
- HIV PrEP Promotion and Resources
- Experiences and Observations of HIV PrEP Providers at Walter Reed National, Military Medical Center, San Antonio Military Medical Center, Naval Medical Center Portsmouth and Naval Medical Center San Diego



tested). Among active and reserve component service members, seroprevalences continue to be higher among Army and Navy members and males than their respective counterparts. [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

Veterans discharged for misconduct have higher risk of homelessness

25 August - U.S. veterans returning from Afghanistan and Iraq who were discharged due to misconduct are more likely to be homeless than other returning vets, according to a new study. "The most significant finding was that 26 percent of veterans who were separated for misconduct-related reasons were homeless at their first VA encounter; and this number climbed to 28 percent within one year after their first VA encounter," said lead author Dr. Adi V. Gundlapalli of the VA Salt Lake City Health Care System. "Collectively, these results represent the strongest risk factor for homelessness among U.S. veterans observed to date, and may help to explain the higher risk of homelessness observed among veterans, despite access to VA benefits and services," Gundlapalli told Reuters Health by email. The researchers used data on 448,290 U.S. active-duty military service members who were separated from the military between 2001 and 2011, deployed in Afghanistan or Iraq, and who subsequently used Veterans Health Administration services. [Reuters](#)

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GLOBAL

C diff clinical disease, not strain, found to be better predictor of outcome

21 August - Different strains of *Clostridium difficile* are almost equally virulent, making clinical presentation of infection the more important predictor of severe outcomes, according to findings of a study published yesterday in *Infection Control and Hospital Epidemiology*. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (third item)

Cancer sniffing dogs to aid British doctors

26 August - They're known as man's best friend; but dogs could soon also be their greatest ally in the fight against prostate cancer. Britain's National Health Service recently approved a trial for dogs capable of sniffing out prostate cancer in the hope that it could show up inaccuracies in the current PSA (prostate specific antigen) test. [Reuters](#)

Global life expectancy rises, but people live sicker for longer

27 August - People around the world are living longer, but many are also living sicker lives for longer, according to a study of all major diseases and injuries in 188 countries. General

**10 Photos that
Prove the Military
wouldn't be the
same without its
Working Dogs**

10 photos that capture the loyalty, strength, and courage of our four-legged companions.



health has improved worldwide, thanks to significant progress against infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS and malaria in the past decade and gains in fighting maternal and child illnesses. But healthy life expectancy has not increased as much, so people are living more years with illness and disability, according to the analysis, published in The Lancet journal.

[Reuters](#)

Less may be more in slowing cholera epidemics

25 August - An oral cholera vaccine that is in short supply could treat more people and save more lives in crisis situations, if one dose were dispensed instead of the recommended two, new Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health research suggests. ... A relatively new vaccine — internationally licensed by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2011 — is in short supply, with roughly two million doses kept in a WHO stockpile. Current protocol calls for two doses of the vaccine to be given at least two weeks apart. ... Using mathematical modeling, the researchers estimated that if vaccination had begun within a year of the earthquake [in Haiti], with enough vaccine to cover 50 percent of the population of Port-au-Prince with a single dose (1.05 million doses), the one-dose strategy would have prevented 78,317 cases of cholera and prevented 783 deaths. [Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health News](#)

Selecting boys over girls is a trend in more and more countries

26 August – ... Many countries have a deep-seated cultural preference for sons over daughters. Inexpensive blood tests that can determine the sex of a fetus as early as seven weeks have been developed. And countries around the world have imported ultrasound equipment. ... In 1995, only six countries had such a marked imbalance of boys to girls. Today, 21 countries have a skewed sex ratio favoring boys. ... "It's largely due to the abortion of females," says Hudson. "But it's also due to passive neglect, such as underfeeding, underimmunization, and failing to take girls to the doctor when they're sick." ... [There are] more than 117 million "missing" females in Asia alone, and many more around the world. And for every missing woman, there is a surplus man who will never establish a family. "Men are unable to marry," Hudson says, and frustrated, single men are more likely get into trouble. "It leads to instability. In masculinized societies, there are issues such as rising violent crime rates, increasing rates of gang activity and rebel group activity, increasing prostitution and trafficking, and greater constraints on the movement of women." [NPR](#)

Study sorts out MERS and SARS epi patterns

25 August - A side-by-side look at MERS-CoV and SARS infection patterns shows differences and some similarities. ... Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) is infecting fewer people but has a higher mortality rate compared with severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), found the researchers, who are from Arizona State University. The comparison also showed that middle-aged men (median age 50) who have multiple

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

Look under Hot Topics & Current Issues.

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chronic health conditions are targets for MERS-CoV. Meanwhile, SARS doesn't seem to discriminate by gender and seems to infect both healthy people as well as those with underlying conditions. However, both diseases spread quickly in hospitals and hospital workers, with healthcare workers making up 21% of cases for both MERS-CoV and SARS. [CIDRAP ICEID News Scan](#) (first item)

The growing global battle against blood-sucking ticks



25 August - ... Diseases spread by ticks are on the rise around the world, spurred by a combination of factors, including shifting climates and population sprawl into rural areas. Reported cases of Lyme, the most common US tick-borne illness, have nearly tripled in the country since 1992, although some of the increase could be due to heightened awareness. Lyme is also a growing problem in parts of Europe, Mongolia and China. ... In parts of Africa, the Middle East, Asia and southern Europe, ticks can spread Crimean–Congo haemorrhagic fever, which is fatal in 40% of cases. And a tick-borne relapsing fever afflicts as many as 1 in 20 residents in parts of Senegal. In the United States, ticks spread at least 16 illnesses, including anaplasmosis, babesiosis, ehrlichiosis and Rocky Mountain spotted fever, all “serious, life-threatening infections”, Beard says. And many are increasing in incidence more quickly than Lyme. In a July 2015 position statement, the Entomological Society of America argued for a national strategy to combat tick-borne diseases. “The recent confluence of environmental, ecological, sociological, and human demographic factors,” it said, “has created a near 'perfect storm' leading to more ticks in more places throughout North America.” [Scientific American](#)

Turning cancer back into healthy tissue

25 August - Scientists believe they may have found a way to turn cancerous cells back into healthy tissue. Their lab-based work suggests there is a biological step that can restore normality and stop cells replicating out of control. When the US researchers added molecules called microRNAs, it put the brakes on cancer, *Nature Cell Biology* reports. Although the early tests in a dish look promising, it is unclear whether it will help treat people with cancer. The Mayo Clinic researchers are hopeful that the new mechanism they have found could apply to all types of cancer. [BBC News](#)

Vaccinations bring hope, bracelets deliver reminders

22 August - ... [Vaccine] schedules are increasingly complex, and young mothers often forget to take children in for shots on time. A clever solution occurred to Lauren Braun. ... Her nonprofit company, Alma Sana, makes flexible silicon bracelets. ... But hers come in pink or blue, fit around a newborn's ankle, and serve as tiny calendars. For example, beneath the number 4 on the bracelet — four months of age — are a triangle, a circle, an X and a square. They represent the vaccines against polio, pneumonia and rotavirus, as well as the pentavalent shot, which protects against five diseases. As the baby gets each one, a nurse uses a hole punch to puncture the appropriate mark. [New York Times](#)

Wilderness Lab: An exploration of heat loss after avalanche burial

24 August - ... At 8,500 feet on the slopes of a Wasatch Mountain ski resort, a group of hypothermia researchers recently built an eight foot high mound of snow, dug a trench down the middle, and buried nine volunteers -- among them undergrads and medical students. The subjects got a taste of what it feels like to be packed in snow for an hour, two feet below the Utah sunshine. Researchers wanted to know: Do avalanche burial victims lose heat faster without insulated head and face protection? The answer might be no. Volunteers completely buried in snow lost heat no more slowly if they were wearing an insulated helmet, goggles, and a balaclava compared to burial subjects who wore only a water repellent hood and swim goggles. ... "The basic principle of losing heat through the head still holds true. However, it takes quite a lot of heat loss to change core temperature," McIntosh said. [MedPage Today](#)

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INFLUENZA

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

During week 32 ending August 15, 2015:

- **Pneumonia and Influenza Mortality:** During week 32, 5.4% of all deaths reported through the 122 Cities Mortality Reporting System were due to pneumonia and influenza. This percentage was below the epidemic threshold of 5.8% for week 32.
- **Outpatient Illness Surveillance:** Nationwide during week 32, 0.7% of patient visits reported through the U.S. Outpatient Influenza-like Illness Surveillance Network (ILINet) were due to influenza-like illness. This percentage is below the national baseline of 2.0%. [CDC](#)

H7N9 gene study shows evolution between waves, regional influences

24 August - Genetic analysis of H7N9 avian influenza viruses collected during the third wave of outbreak activity last fall from poultry environments and markets in China's Guangdong province showed that they descended from viruses that circulated during the second wave. ... The viruses in the third wave fell into two lineages, which were closely related to the H7N9 viruses that sickened humans in the same local or nearby regions, the team found. Researchers suggested that the dominant H7N9 strains had a dynamic process for adapting to the local environment, and they noted that the internal genes showed regional hallmarks,

which might relate to the transport of live birds across provinces or the influence of migratory birds. [CIDRAP Avian Flu Scan](#) (second item)

Incidence of medically attended influenza during pandemic and post-pandemic seasons through the Influenza Incidence Surveillance Project, 2009–13

20 August - From Oct 1, 2009, to July 31, 2013, outpatient clinics representing 13 health jurisdictions in the USA reported counts of influenza-like illness (fever including cough or sore throat) and all patient visits by age. During four years, staff at 104 unique clinics (range 35–64 per year) with a combined median population of 368 559 (IQR 352 595–428 286) attended 35 663 patients with influenza-like illness and collected 13 925 respiratory specimens. ... The site-median peak percentage of specimens positive for influenza ranged from 58·3% to 77·8%. Children aged 2 to 17 years had the highest incidence of influenza-associated visits (range 4·2–28·0 per 1000 people by year), and adults older than 65 years had the lowest (range 0·5–3·5 per 1000 population). Influenza A H3N2, pandemic H1N1, and influenza B equally co-circulated in the first post-pandemic season, whereas H3N2 predominated for the next two seasons. Of patients for whom data was available, influenza vaccination was reported in 3289 (28·7%) of 11 459 patients with influenza-like illness, and antivirals were prescribed to 1644 (13·8%) of 11 953 patients. [The Lancet](#)

Influenza vaccine provides 6-month protection from respiratory illness

25 August - A study of non-active duty Department of Defense (DoD) beneficiaries found that the protection provided by influenza vaccination lasted up to 6 months, according to findings presented yesterday at the ICEID. Researchers from the Naval Health Research Center, San Diego, Calif., conducted febrile respiratory illness surveillance of 1,720 DoD beneficiaries at three outpatient clinics in San Diego and Great Lakes, Ill., from 2010 to 2014. Flu vaccination reduced the risk of a doctor visit by 50% to 70% over the course of a flu season. Protection against influenza lasted for 6 months following vaccination, suggesting that administering the flu vaccine in the fall may prevent a greater number of flu infections. The study noted that flu vaccination provided little to no protection against influenza after 6 months, highlighting the importance of yearly vaccination. [CIDRAP ICEID News Scan](#) (third item)

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VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY

FDA wants food companies to hand over their pathogens

27 August - Investigations into foodborne illness are being radically transformed by whole genome sequencing, which federal officials say is enabling them to identify the source of an outbreak far more quickly and prevent additional cases. Previously, samples from sick patients were sent to state and federal labs, where disease detectives ran tests to see if the infections were caused by the same bug. When enough matches emerged, typically a dozen or so, epidemiologists interviewed sick people, looking for a common food that was causing the outbreak. ... Now, the FDA is building a network of state and federal labs equipped to map out the exact DNA sequence of strains of *Listeria*, *Salmonella* and other foodborne pathogens found in sick patients. These sequences are then uploaded to a public database housed at the National Institutes of Health. [Reuters](#)

Salmonella outbreak investigation tied to frozen tuna declared over

24 August - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on Aug 19 released its final report on a multistate *Salmonella* outbreak linked to frozen yellowfin tuna imported by the United States from Indonesia. The outbreak sickened 65 people, 18% of whom were hospitalized, in 11 states between Mar 5 and Jul 20. Illnesses were attributed to two strains: *Salmonella* Paratyphi B variant L(+) tartrate(+) in 64 people and *Salmonella* Weltevreden in one person. Investigators identified the source of the outbreak as frozen yellowfin tuna imported by Osamu Corporation in Gardena, Calif., from one Indonesian processing plant. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

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WELLNESS

Dental device promises pain-free tooth repair

25 August - ... [A] new technology developed by British scientists could dramatically reduce the need for unpleasant dental drilling. Based in the Scottish city of Perth, Reminova say their patented technology can painlessly repair teeth by 'supercharging' the remineralization of tooth enamel. ... Remineralization is a natural process where minerals present in saliva and some foods enter the tooth enamel to make it stronger and more dense. But Reminova's prototype device can speed up this process to the same amount of time it would take to have a filling -- but painlessly, without injections and drilling. [Reuters](#)

How stressful work environments hurt workers' health

25 August - Should long and unpredictable hours, excessive job demands, capricious management and other aspects of the modern workplace be banned on the same ground? That is the question raised by a new study from researchers at Stanford and Harvard, who found that workplace stress is about as dangerous to one's health as secondhand smoke. ... Among the findings:

- Work-family conflict more than doubled the odds of an employee reporting poor mental health and increased the odds of self-reported poor physical health by about 90 percent.
- Job insecurity raised the odds of self-reported poor physical health by about 50 percent.
- Low organizational justice increased the odds of having a physician-diagnosed condition by about 50 percent.
- High job demands raised the odds of a physician-diagnosed illness by 35 percent.

[New York Times](#)

How the prescription painkiller Fentanyl became a street drug

26 August - Fentanyl is a favored painkiller because it acts fast. But it's also 80 to 100 times more potent than morphine. The powerful drug has made its way to the streets and increasingly is being used to cut heroin — resulting in a deadly combination. ... Fentanyl, Capretto explains, was originally invented to relieve pain and is often injected in patients prior to surgical procedures. The synthetic opioid can also be prescribed in a lozenge or patch to treat the severe pain associated with metastatic, colon and pancreatic cancer. "Patterns of abuse actually began with hospital workers, anesthesiologists and nurses," Capretto says. ... Between 2005 and 2007, more than 1,000 U.S. deaths were caused by fentanyl-heroin overdoses, according to the Drug Enforcement Administration. Seizures of drugs containing the painkiller jumped from 942 to 3,334 between 2013 and 2014. In March, the DEA issued a [warning](#) on fentanyl as a "threat to public health and safety." [NPR](#)

In the search for the perfect sugar substitute, another candidate emerges

25 August - ... This year, [Tate & Lyle] launched its latest gift to your sweet tooth. It's called allulose. "This is a rare sugar. A sugar that's found in nature," Harrison explains. Chemically speaking, it's almost identical to ordinary sugar. It has the same chemical formula as fructose and glucose, but the atoms of hydrogen and oxygen are arranged slightly differently. And that slight difference means that my body won't turn this sugar into calories. ... [A nutrition expert] says, "the bad news is, you have to be very cautious about how much you eat of this stuff." Because once it goes into the large bowel, all the bacteria that live there may start feasting on it. In other words, the allulose might ferment, releasing gas and creating painful intestinal problems. [NPR](#)

Low-risk moles may still lead to aggressive melanoma

23 August - Patients with low-risk characteristics for melanoma may paradoxically have an increased risk of developing aggressive melanoma lesions, investigators reported here. The review of 281 melanoma cases showed that two-thirds of the patients had fewer than 50 nevi (moles), a low-risk trait, and many of them also had no atypical or dysplastic nevi, another low-risk trait. However, melanomas associated with the low-risk features were significantly thicker, exhibited a trend toward a faster growth rate, and were significantly more likely to have ulceration. [MedPage Today](#)

Rethinking breakfast: What we eat may trump when we eat



21 August - ... [In] recent years, the idea of the importance of a morning meal has been bolstered by studies linking breakfast to improved performance in school and a reduced risk of heart disease. But here's the thing: Lots of American adults aren't sitting down to breakfast anymore. And, it seems, for many of us, eating three "square meals" no longer fits our lifestyle. As a society, we're moving away from prescribed meal times toward more continuous snacking. ... If you sift through the scientific evidence, there doesn't seem to be anything magical about the idea of eating *first thing* in the morning. Lots of us aren't hungry until a few hours after we wake up. So, if you are a "grab-a-yogurt-at-10 a.m." person, that's OK. What may be more important for weight management, and even weight loss, is taking in most of your calories before the sun goes down. [NPR](#)

Short bouts of activity may offset lack of sustained exercise in kids

27 August - Brief intervals of exercise during otherwise sedentary periods may offset the lack of more sustained exercise and could protect children against diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer, according to a small study by researchers at the National Institutes of Health. Children who interrupted periods of sitting with three minutes of moderate-intensity walking every half hour had lower levels of blood glucose and insulin, compared to periods when they remained seated for three hours. Moreover, on the day they walked, the children did not eat any more at lunch than on the day they remained sedentary. [NIH](#)

Third-party evaluation: A review of dietary supplements dispensed by military treatment facilities from 2007 to 2011

July 2015 - Third-party certification/verification of dietary supplements (DS), although not mainstream, is one way to help ensure high-quality products. ... We reviewed DS dispensed

from all Department of Defense military treatment facilities over a 5-year period to determine which products had been third-party reviewed and certified/verified. ... Over 1.5 million dietary supplement prescriptions consisting of 753 different products were dispensed from 2007 through 2011. Less than 3.6% of the products examined were third-party certified/verified by any of the three most well-known evaluation organizations. ... This is not unexpected, as third party certification is not yet mainstream. However, one way to reduce potential hazards and exposure to unsafe products is to encourage use of supplements that have third-party certification/verification. [AMSUS](#) (abstract only)

Why the healthy school lunch program is in trouble. Before/after photos of what students ate.

26 August - ... [Researcher] Sarah Amin reports that [school cafeteria food] waste has become heartbreakingly common since the Agriculture Department rolled out new requirements in the 2012 school year that mandated that children who were taking part in the federal lunch program choose either a fruit or vegetable with their meals. ... The design of the experiment was simple. In the spring of 2012, before the USDA mandate went into effect, researchers visited two elementary schools and assigned each third-, fourth- and fifth-grader a number and took digital pictures of their trays before and after they ate and then went back and tried to quantify what was eaten and what was thrown away. Then they repeated the experiment the following school year which was the first year of the new requirement. ... {Children's} consumption of fruits and vegetables actually went down 13 percent after the mandate took effect and, worse, they were throwing away a distressing 56 percent more than before. [Washington Post](#)

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USAFRICOM

Botswana issues historic HIV ruling

26 August - ... On Wednesday, the Botswana Court of Appeal unanimously ruled that the government is required to provide foreign prisoners treatment at government expense. The government had earlier refused to treat them. The court also ordered all foreign inmates to receive the same HIV testing as do prisoners who are citizens. ... "The decision's enforcement will mean access to life-saving treatment for people who are particularly vulnerable to HIV." [VOA](#)

Côte d'Ivoire: The lost childhoods behind our chocolate

25 August - ... As peace and security have improved, the number of people willing to cross the border – and send their children – to work in Ivorian cocoa fields is on the rise. Between 2009 and 2014, the number of children involved in hazardous work in cocoa production in

West Africa increased by 46 percent, according to [recent research](#) by the US-based Tulane University. The estimated number of child labourers in Cote d'Ivoire has more than doubled, from 800,000 pre-crisis to 1.62 million now, according to a joint investigation by UNICEF and the Ivoirian government. The vast majority come either from abroad – Mali, Burkina Faso and Togo – or from the poorer, rural parts of Côte d'Ivoire in the north and centre of the country. [IRIN](#)

Guinea: New Ebola outbreak cases stay at three, limited to Guinea

26 August - With three new cases, Guinea was the only country in West Africa's outbreak region to report Ebola infections last week, and responders are on high alert because all of the confirmed case-patients, one of them a taxi driver, pose a high risk of transmission. The World Health Organization (WHO) said in its weekly snapshot of the outbreak that Sierra Leone has gone 2 weeks without a new case and that the outbreak region's weekly total has remained at three for 4 weeks in a row. All three of Guinea's new cases are from Conakry, a sign that the outbreak's footprint has shrunk but that transmission is also still a threat, given the urban setting. [CIDRAP](#)

Senegal: Jailing of gay men in Senegal poses setback to HIV fight in Africa

26 August - It took less than a minute for a panel of judges in Senegal to sentence seven men to six months in prison for homosexuality last week, but campaigners say the harm to the African nation's anti-HIV efforts could last much longer. Senegal, a Muslim country regarded as a pillar of democracy in turbulent West Africa, is one of about 30 African states with anti-homosexuality laws. Yet the country of 14 million people also prides itself on its vigorous, and successful, anti-HIV efforts. Campaigners warned that Friday's verdict, based on a police discovery of condoms and lubricant in the house where the men were arrested, was a hammer blow to groups promoting safe sex. Gay men's preventative efforts could now transform them into targets for authorities, campaigners said. [Reuters](#)

Sierra Leone releases last known Ebola patient from hospital

24 August - Sierra Leone released its last confirmed Ebola patient from hospital on Monday and began a 42-day countdown to being declared free of the virus, medical sources said. The world's worst known Ebola epidemic has raged in West Africa for more than 18 months, infecting more than 28,000 people and killing more than a third of them. Sierra Leone confirmed its first case in May 2014 and has since recorded the highest number of cases in the region, although neighboring Liberia has suffered more fatalities. [Reuters](#)

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USCENTCOM

Saudi Arabia: MERS sickens eight more in Riyadh outbreak

25 August - Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Health (MOH) today reported eight more lab-confirmed Middle East respiratory coronavirus (MERS-CoV) cases, one of them fatal and all from Riyadh, where a large hospital-linked outbreak is ongoing. The MOH also said five case-patients announced previously have died from their infections. All of the patients—five men and three women—are adults, with ages ranging from 30 to 81 years old. ... Exposure to confirmed or suspected contacts has been pinned down for one patient but is still under review for the other seven. ... Currently, 57 people are still being treated for their illnesses and nine are on home isolation. ... Today's developments lift the country's overall total from the disease to 1,162 cases, which includes 498 deaths. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

Study finds surprising byproduct of Middle Eastern Conflicts: Cleaner air

21 August - Civil unrest and humanitarian crises can now be detected from space — because of, somewhat surprisingly, cleaner air. A paper published on Friday in the journal *Science* analyzed satellite data from observations of major cities in the Middle East and found that measurements of nitrogen oxides in the air around those cities provided insights into the effects of war, civil unrest and other crises. Nitrogen dioxide, a byproduct of the burning of fossil fuels, is part of the chemical reactions that produce ozone and smog. Nitrogen oxides are often used by scientists as an indicator of economic activity and of the effectiveness of pollution-control measures. From 2005 to 2010, the Middle East had some of the world's fastest-growing levels of polluting emissions, in step with economic development. According to the paper, however, in recent years many of the cities in the region showed a rapid decline in levels of nitrogen oxides, while levels continued to rise elsewhere in the world. [New York Times](#)

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USEUCOM

United Kingdom: Elderly people warned over alcohol consumption

24 August - One in five people over 65 who drink is consuming an "unsafe" level of alcohol, say researchers. Experts warned that GPs were "less attuned" to drinking problems among

elderly people. Analysis of health records in London found that heavier drinkers tended to be male and relatively affluent. For older people, the report said, drinking more than the recommended amount carried an additional risk of confusion and falls. National guidelines advise no more than 14 units of alcohol a week for women and 21 units a week for men.

[BBC News](#)

United Kingdom/Gaza Strip: British doctors treat injured in resource-strapped Gaza

22 August - ... One year after Israel's 51-day offensive on Gaza, which killed more than 2,200 Palestinians and injured 11,000 others, a British medical delegation from King's College Hospital continues to travel to Gaza on a regular basis to treat the many wounded. Gaza suffers from a severe shortage of medical supplies due to the Israeli and Egyptian siege of the Palestinian territory. The orthopaedic and plastic surgeons from King's have been coming to Gaza since 2009 to treat seriously injured people, train surgeons and provide equipment. Their main project has been to educate and train doctors and surgeons in Gaza on primary trauma care. After the 2014 war, they began performing operations at Gaza's main al-Shifa hospital. [Al Jazeera](#)

Spain: Case of chikungunya without travel history to endemic areas

20 August - On 3 August 2015, Spain notified the EU (through the EWRS tool) and WHO, about a case of chikungunya virus infection in a resident in the city of Gandia, Valencian Community of Valencia. [ECDC Communicable Disease Threats Report](#) (first item)

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USNORTHCOM

Canada: AHS declares whooping cough outbreak in northern Alberta

26 August - Alberta Health Services has declared a whooping cough outbreak in northern Alberta. So far this year, 182 cases of pertussis, or whooping cough, have been confirmed in the region, which includes Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie. That number makes up about half of the total diagnosed cases in the province. The northern region normally sees 40 to 50 cases over an entire year, said Dr. Albert de Villiers, medical officer of health for the AHS northern region. [CBC News](#)

U.S.: CDC and FDA try to contain Cyclosporiasis outbreak



26 August - Over the course of Cyclosporiasis outbreak in the previous months which resulted to 495 reported cases to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as of Aug 21, 2015. The cases spread as much as 29 states in U.S. alone, as investigations are still on-going and inconclusive yet, the strongest possible source of the outbreak is the cilantro that was shipped from Puebla, Mexico. Shipments of fresh produce from Puebla are currently under close watch, if not banned from entering the U.S. border. However, products from other states of Mexico are considered safe. FDA inspection on 11 farms found poor sanitary conditions such as fecal matter and soiled toiletries and restrooms with neither running water nor toiletries. [Science Times](#)

U.S.: Famed Hawaii beach closed following sewage spill

25 August - Stretches of Waikiki's white sands and blue waters were deserted Tuesday after officials warned that heavy rains triggered a half-million-gallon sewage spill near Hawaii's world-famous tourist district. ... The heavy rains overwhelmed the sewage system Monday morning, causing 500,000 gallons of wastewater to spew from manholes, said Lori Kahikina, Honolulu's director of environmental services. ... The city is advising people to avoid a 4-mile stretch of waterfront from Kapahulu Avenue in Waikiki to Point Panic in Kakaako. ... The state Department of Environmental Services said that Kailua, Kaneohe and Kalaniana'ole Highway in Aiea also experienced overflowing sewer systems. The Department of Health issued warnings for people to stay out of the water in all affected areas, including Kaneohe and Mamala bays. ... The entire state remained under a flash-flood watch again Tuesday, with more rain expected. This year's hurricane season, which lasts through the end of November, has been particularly active. [Fox News](#)

U.S.: Human plague — United States, 2015

25 August - Since April 1, 2015, a total of 11 cases of human plague have been reported in residents of six states: Arizona (two), California (one), Colorado (four), Georgia (one), New Mexico (two), and Oregon (one). The two cases in Georgia and California residents have been linked to exposures at or near Yosemite National Park in the southern Sierra Nevada Mountains of California. Nine of the 11 patients were male; median age was 52 years (range = 14–79 years). Three patients aged 16, 52, and 79 years died. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

U.S., Illinois: Rauner dumps treatment from anti-heroin measure, citing cost

25 August - Gov. Bruce Rauner on Monday sought to rewrite a wide-ranging measure aimed at curbing heroin use, eliminating a requirement that the state's Medicaid health care

program for the poor pay for medication and therapy programs to treat addiction. The Republican governor said the state can't afford the extra cost while "facing unprecedented fiscal difficulties." Supporters of the original legislation argued the governor's change creates an unfair system in which those who can afford insurance get help for their addiction while low-income patients end up in an emergency room or a courtroom. ... The measure also would require police departments and firehouses to stock opioid antidotes that could be used to counteract heroin overdoses. [Chicago Tribune](#)

U.S.: Investigation of acute flaccid myelitis in U.S. children, 2014-15

21 August - From August to October 2014, CDC received increased reports of children across the United States who developed a sudden onset of weakness in one or more arms or legs with MRI scans that showed inflammation of the gray matter—nerve cells—in the spinal cord. This illness is called acute flaccid myelitis. CDC continues to receive sporadic reports of cases. From August 2014 to July 2015, CDC has verified reports of 120 children in 34 states who developed acute flaccid myelitis that meets CDC's outbreak case definition(<http://www.cdc.gov/ncird/investigation/viral/2014-15/hcp.html#case>).

- The median age of the children was about 7 years.
- Almost all of them were hospitalized; some were put on breathing machines.
- Most patients had fever and/or respiratory illness before onset of neurologic symptoms.
- About 7 out of 10 of the children had elevated white blood cell counts, often with elevated protein levels, in their spinal fluid.
- About two thirds of the children who have been observed (median 19 days) after their illness reported some improvement in symptoms, while about one third showed no improvement. Only two of the children have fully recovered.
- CDC tested many different specimens from these patients for a wide range of pathogens that can result in this syndrome. Despite extensive testing, no pathogen was consistently detected in the patients' spinal fluid; a pathogen detected in the patients' spinal fluid would be good evidence to indicate cause of the illness. [CDC](#)

U.S.: Too few gay teens get HIV tests, study finds

26 August - Gay teen boys are much less likely to get tested for HIV than older gay males, researchers report. The researchers surveyed more than 300 gay and bisexual male teens between the ages of 14 and 18 from across the United States. Only one in five had ever been tested for HIV, a rate significantly lower than among older gay and bisexual men, the researchers noted. For example, a 2008 U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention-sponsored study of gay men found that 75 percent of those aged 18 to 19 had been tested for HIV. Major barriers to gay teens getting tested for HIV are not knowing where to go for a test, concerns about being recognized at a testing location, and believing they won't get infected, the Northwestern University researchers said. ... The incidence of new HIV infections is rising among young gay and bisexual men. [Health](#)

U.S.: Wildfire smoke becomes the health threat that won't go away

25 August - ... Health departments across the West are mobilizing to protect residents from smoke generated by dozens of fires that have sent smoke as far east as the Midwest. ... An extended drought and climate change mean more fires that burn longer, Vannoy says. The public health department is trying to get the word out through the state's smoke blog and social media, so people can learn how to protect themselves. For schools, that means indoor recess and no outdoor sports practice when air quality levels are unhealthy, according to an advisory the public health department sent to Idaho schools. [NPR](#)

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USPACOM

China: They're invisible in China - Portraits of the mentally ill



22 August - ... [Liu Yuyang] went to two cities in the Guangdong province and documented the daily lives of six families struggling with mental health patients — a group, Liu says, that is too often ignored by the Chinese government and stigmatized by the public. China has a staggering 173 million people with some sort of diagnosable mental disorder, according to a 2012 study in the journal *Lancet*. Of those, 158 million have never received any treatment. And China averages one psychiatrist for every 83,000 people. So many patients depend on their families for help. [NPR](#)

India: Medicine in India - rampant quackery, baffling drug landscape

23 August - ... [Hard] data are emerging that show how dismal medical care is for many in India, with providers routinely failing to diagnose common diseases and frequently prescribing useless and hazardous drugs. In North India, for example, the chances of getting a helpful prescription at the doctor's office are no better than a coin toss, while "you have about an 80% chance of getting stuff you don't need," estimates Jishnu Das, PhD, a lead economist at the World Bank in Washington, D.C., who has been studying India's healthcare sector for years. ... Experts say India's drug market, estimated at more than \$14 billion by research firm IMS Health, is full of untested and dangerous products. As recently as May, researchers reported in the journal *PLOS Medicine* that "large numbers of unapproved formulations are available" in India and "should be banned immediately." [MedPage Today](#)

Japan: No nitrogen, Freon in depot explosion

25 August - The investigation into explosions at a U.S. Army depot in Japan has found there was no nitrogen, Freon or compressed air on site, contrary to original reports, officials said Tuesday. Multiple explosions and a large fire were reported after midnight local time Monday at the Sagami General Depot in Sagamihara, a city about 25 miles southwest of Tokyo, officials said. Photos taken after daybreak and released by the Army show dozens of gray canisters lying on the floor, and what looks like mangled storage racks. The walls of the one-story, concrete building remain intact, but the windows and doors are damaged and about half of the roof collapsed, the Army said. There are no indications of injuries. [Army Times](#)

South Korea: Suicide nation

27 August - ... [Some] societies and cultures seem more prone to suicide than others. Take South Korea, for example, where suicide has become the fourth most common cause of death, with up to 40 of its citizens taking their own lives every day. For the last eight years it has had the highest suicide rates in the industrialised world (and the second highest in the whole world behind Guyana) and it is now, astonishingly the number one cause of death for its citizens between the ages of 10 and 30. Delve a little deeper into these statistics (gathered as the nation has become more concerned about the phenomenon) and you will find that men commit suicide twice as often as women; that children and young adults will cite the stress of living in a hyper competitive society or pressure over exam results and college entrance as the main reason for contemplating suicide; that middle aged South Koreans most often turn to it through concern over personal economic problems; and that the elderly will kill themselves (or consider doing so) because of isolation as a result of the breakdown of the traditional family unit. [Al Jazeera](#)

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USSOUTHCOM

Chikungunya outbreak in Americas grows by more than 34,000 cases

24 August - The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) on Aug 21 reported 34,866 new cases of chikungunya in the Caribbean and Americas. The outbreak total, adjusted for ongoing case confirmation, is 1,679,223. ... Nicaragua, reporting cases for the first time in 19 weeks, had the largest increase with 20,953 new cases, bringing its 2015 outbreak total to 41,134. El Salvador, reporting for the first time in 4 weeks, had 10,349 new cases, for an outbreak total this year of 10,349. Colombia, which has reported thousands of cases per week for the past several months, reported 3,046 new cases last week, bringing its 2015

outbreak total to 319,608. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

Dominican Republic: Dengue death toll reaches 43

26 August - Deaths caused by dengue fever totaled 43 cases as of the first week of this month, 10 more than during the same period last year. Nonetheless, the General Epidemiological Directorate at the Ministry of Public Health says that the disease is within the safety range, rising at times to alarming levels. The number of cases so far this year is 3,807 and 235 suspected cases were reported from August 2-8, including two deaths, for a total of 965 in the last four weeks. [Dominican Today](#)

Venezuela: Cancer, transplant patients protest Venezuela's medicine shortages

27 August - Venezuelans with chronic medical conditions such as breast cancer, hemophilia and transplants protested in Caracas on Thursday, the latest demonstration to demand urgent medicines in a country whose health care system is beset with shortages. Around 13,000 people with chronic issues are at risk of severe harm if they do not take medicines including chemotherapy and medicines to prevent organ transplants being rejected, according to organizer CodeVida, a non-profit umbrella health group. A combination of currency controls, slumping domestic production and cross-border smuggling have caused acute shortages of medical supplies in socialist-led Venezuela. With an estimated seven in 10 drugs currently unavailable, rights groups are warning the situation is increasingly untenable. [Reuters](#)

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