

Global Health Newsletter

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Staten Island University Hospital

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Americas

Increase in Leprosy Cases in Florida

There have been 15 cases of leprosy recorded in Florida this year. Central Florida accounts for over 80% of Florida's cases of leprosy (also known as Hansen's disease) and 1 in 5 cases of leprosy in the United States originates from the state of Florida. Due to the prevalence of leprosy in the state of Florida it is now considered endemic to the area.

Leprosy is still incredibly rare with only about 150 -200 cases (250,000 cases throughout the rest of the world) reported annually in the US. 95% of the population is naturally immune from the disease and therefore, only five percent will demonstrate symptoms. The cause of leprosy is due to the bacteria *Mycobacterium leprae* and the development of symptoms is very slow, often taking 20 years to show signs of disease. The bacteria's only natural hosts are humans and armadillos.

Nine-banded armadillos in the Southeastern US carry the bacteria; however, it is not entirely clear how the bacteria is transmitted to people as many patients are unable to recall direct contact with the animal.

The disease can affect the nerves, skin, eyes and nasal mucosa. The bacteria attack the nerves which become swollen under the skin and can lead to decrease sensation. If untreated, the nerves become permanently damaged and can result in the paralysis of the hands and feet. The treatment is with a course of antibiotics for up to two years in duration.

Further reading

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/08/02/health/leprosy-florida.html>



Middle East/Northern Africa

Conflict in Sudan

Sudan is a country in Northeast Africa and is the largest country in Africa. It borders seven other countries and has a population of approximately 45 million people. The official language is Arabic. 70 percent of the population is Muslim while Christians and Animists make up the other 30 percent. Khartoum is the capital of Sudan and is located where the White Nile and Blue Nile join together and flow north to Egypt and into the Mediterranean.

The country gained its independence in 1956 and since then has experienced more than 15 military coups. One of the most publicized conflicts was the ethnic cleansing/genocide in Darfur between 2003-2005 which led to the death of 300,000 people and displaced 2.7 million.



<https://www.worldatlas.com/maps/sudan>

The most recent conflict began on April 15, 2023, between the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF). Previously these warring factions were allies who united to overthrow longtime Sudanese dictator Omar al-Bashir. They promised a peaceful transition to democracy; however, toppled the transitional civilian government in a coup in 2021 and have been at war with one another ever since. The majority of this newest conflict has been located in the capital Khartoum.

Of the 45 million people who live in Sudan it is estimated that 24.7 million require some form of humanitarian assistance. Since this newest conflict began, over 3.9 million people have been displaced. In the first two weeks of fighting, the cost of basic goods rose by 40 to 100 percent with water being sold at twice the usual price. Fuel prices have skyrocketed from \$4.20 USD to \$67 USD per gallon. It is reported that 70 percent of hospitals in conflict-affected areas are no longer functional. There have also been many attacks on health facilities with 53 attacks recorded.

The need for humanitarian assistance is great and only increasing. However, many organizations are pulling out due to security concerns. Before the current conflict, 174 national NGOs, international NGOs and UN agencies had operations in Sudan. In late July, that number dropped to 85. However, within the remaining 85, many have decreased their numbers of employees due to security concerns. For example, the organization, Save the Children, cut 20 percent of the organization's workforce in Sudan due to security concerns. Many countries have closed their embassies in Sudan, including the US.

Further Reading

<https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/sudan/>

<https://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/sudan/facts.html>

<https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2023/08/01/exclusive-sudanese-aid-workers-face-hundreds-job-losses>

<https://shabaka.org/emergency-response/>

Asia/Pacific

Japanese are Suffering from Hikikomori

The term "hikikomori" translates to "shut-ins" and is credited to a 1998 book by Japanese psychologist, Tamaki Saito, about social withdrawal. The Japanese government estimates that 1.5 million people are living as recluses. The Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare established the following criteria for hikikomori: 1) a lifestyle centered at home; 2) no interest or willingness to attend school or work; 3) symptom duration of at least six months; 4) exclusion of mental disorders such as schizophrenia, mental retardation or other mental disorders 5) among those with no interest or willingness to attend school or work, those who maintain personal relationships have been excluded. Using this criteria, one in 50 people between the ages 15-64 meet the definition of hikikomori.



<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20190129-the-plight-of-japans-modern-hermits>

The government has fears that this expanding Hikikomori population could compound economic stagnation in Japan, especially with the already increasing aging population and decreasing birth rates. One survey found that the most important factor behind hikikomori syndrome was illness, followed by workplace problems. The largest age group affected are those in their 40s and 50s and is equal among men and women. Many of these people are dependent on their elderly parents and once their parents die they either commit suicide or are in a state of self-neglect and often die themselves.

One program targeted to help people reenter society is an Avatar scheme which where people can join a group conversation in person, at a town hall or virtually using an anonymous avatar as they watch a livestream support group. The goal is to motivate them to leave their homes. In 2021, Japan created the post of 'minister for loneliness and isolation' to look at the wider problem of societal exclusion.

Further reading

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/climate-and-people/japan-recluse-generation-hikikomori-shut-in-syndrome/>

Sub-Saharan Africa

Food Aid to Ethiopia Restored

In May 2023, the World Food Program (WFP) and the US (the largest current donor to Ethiopia) paused food distribution in Ethiopia's war-torn Tigray region in response to significant amounts of grain that were being diverted and sold instead of reaching those in need. In one single town, enough stolen food was found for sale in markets to feed 134,000 people for a month. Investigations uncovered that Ethiopian officials were involved in the illegal selling of donor grain. Many donors are calling for the complete removal of the government involvement from the system; however, WFP must work with the government making this an impossible request.



<https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/05/1136347>

It is estimated 5.3 million people in the Tigray region are starving due to war and famine and the WFP had been providing emergency food assistance to nearly six million before this discovery. Tigray has been at war since November 2020 between the federal government and forces led by the Tigray People's Liberation Front which has resulted in the death of tens of thousands, created a famine that has affected hundreds of thousands and displaced 2.5 million people. 20 million people (out of 120 million) in the region are reliant on humanitarian aid for survival.

It is unclear how many people died from the cessation of food distribution. One USAID administrator, Samantha Power said: "suspending food assistance at a time of such vulnerability is an absolutely wrenching thing that none of us would ever wish to be a part of, or had anything to do with. . . one could have no confidence that the food we're bringing to Ethiopia, that U.S. taxpayers are paying for, was actually reaching this vulnerable people."

On August 8th, the WFP restarted the distribution of food aid to the Tigray region of Ethiopia. The United Nations started distributing 15 kilogram pre-packed bags of wheat to 100,000 people as part of a pilot project with improved monitoring. The new measures include digitally registering beneficiaries, adding markings to grain sacks, creating feedback hotlines and increased trainings for aid partners.

Further reading

<https://tghat.com/2023/05/08/the-suspension-of-food-aid-to-tigray-expected-to-kill-innocent-civilians/>
<https://apnews.com/article/ethiopia-united-nations-usaid-hunger-68b749c362cec09a4400582da7c135ea9>

Europe

New UK Refugee Housing on a Barge

On August 7th 15 asylum-seekers ages 18 to 65 were moved onto a barge, Bibby Stockholm, in southern England to help the U.K. government cut costs of sheltering people seeking protection. Currently the UK government spends £6 million (nearly \$7.6 million) daily on accommodating migrants in hotels.

The Assistant General Secretary, Ben Selby, said the floating hostel has been retrofitted for 222 people not the 500 the government wants to accommodate. Previously this barge was used to provide housing for workers in the marina when accommodation isn't available. It consists of three stories of closely packed bedrooms and includes a kitchen, dining area, common rooms and laundry facilities. Those who will live on board will be able to come and go as they please.



<https://www.cnn.com/2023/08/07/uk/bibby-stockholm-bergs-af-asylum-seekers-intl-gbr/index.html>

There are many criticism of housing these men in this barge. The CEO of a charity for refugees, Care4Calais said: "Amongst our clients are people who are disabled, who have survived torture and modern slavery and who have had traumatic experiences at sea. To house any human being in a 'quasi floating prison' like the Bibby Stockholm is inhumane." Care4Calais successfully blocked an additional 20 men were supposed to be transferred to the Bibby Stockholm.

There are also concerns about potential infectious diseases as 500 men will be in living close quarters. Additionally, the UK fire brigade expressed concerns about the potential fire hazards and is concerned a potential "death trap" if a fire were to break out.

Further Reading

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/08/07/world/europe/uk-migrant-bergs.html>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/8/7/uk-moves-asylum-seekers-to-bergs-as-hotel-bills-rise-to-7-7m-a-day>

What's New at Northwell's Center for Global Health? With contributions from Daniel Leon MBA PMP

Mahdia Burn Victim Returns Home After Life Saving Surgery

The 12-year-old girl, brought from Guyana to Staten Island's SIUH Burn Center for critical burn surgery in early June, has been discharged from the hospital. She is now headed back home to Guyana for her recovery after undergoing successful skin graft procedures performed by Dr. Michael Cooper. The girl sustained 45 percent burns due to a fire that claimed the lives of 20 students at a secondary school in Mahdia, Guyana. Her ongoing recovery will be overseen by Dr. Shilindra Rajkumar in collaboration with the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC). Dr. Shilindra is the chief surgeon GPHC and provided her initial burn care the night of the fire.



Hill-Rom Supports Northwell Global in Guyana

The medical device company, Hill-Rom, recently engaged with the Center for Global Health (CGH) to support Georgetown Public Hospital Corp (GPHC) in Guyana by providing essential Emergency equipment. The initial contribution included 30 new emergency stretchers.

Given the surge in hospital visits due to the new Cov-2 variant, the focus was on aiding the most affected areas of Guyana's Georgetown Public Hospital (GPHC). GPHC's CEO, Robbie Rambarran, identified the need to equip the emergency department stretchers. To facilitate this, Robbie Rambarran collaborated with The Center for Global Health at Northwell.



"In 2023, amidst global health challenges, advanced emergency stretchers are not just equipment—they are vital for timely care and rapid response," emphasized Shari Jardine, Deputy Director of Global Health at CGH.

CGH connected with Phyllis McCready, Northwell's Chief Procurement Officer, to facilitate the collaboration between CPHC and Hill-Rom to finalize a comprehensive list of supplies required. Hill-Rom will also aid in the transportation of the provided materials to Guyana.

Northwell's Global Health Team Provides Burn Care in Dominican Republic

Northwell's Center for Global Health (CGH) traveled to San Cristobal, Dominican Republic last week to assist local healthcare professionals provide burn care after an explosion of a nearby plastic factory that resulted in over 30 deaths. Members of Northwell's Staten Island University Burn Team, including the Associate Director, burn surgeon Dr. Kimlyn Long traveled to the region. The team visited multiple burn victims and provided burn care to the patients and educated family members on correct techniques of burn care.

Two Northwell emergency physicians, Dr. Madi Lindauer and Dr. Joseph Ciano, were also present to assist the SIUH Burn team assess the needs of local hospitals in their burn care capacity.



Upcoming Lectures/Conferences

Global Health Perspective- by Dr. Eric Cioe- Peña

Dr. Eric Cioe-Peña, Vice President of Global Health for Northwell Health and an Associate Professor of Emergency Medicine at the Donald and Barbara Zucker School of Medicine at Hofstra/Northwell to discuss how as our world becomes increasingly interconnected, understanding global health is crucial.

<https://sites.hofstra.edu/wellsaid/podcast/global-health-perspective/>

Global Climate Litigation Report: 2023 Status Review

Climate litigation represents a frontier solution to change the dynamics of the fight against climate change. This Global Climate Litigation Report: 2023 Status Review shows that people are increasingly turning to the courts to combat the climate crisis. As of December 2022, there have been 2,180 climate-related cases filed in 65 jurisdictions, including international and regional courts, tribunals, quasi-judicial bodies, or other adjudicatory bodies, such as Special Procedures at the United Nations and arbitration tribunals. This represents a steady increase from 884 cases in 2017 and 1,550 cases in 2020. Children and youth, women's groups, local communities, and Indigenous Peoples, among others, are taking a prominent role in bringing these cases and driving climate change governance reform in more and more countries around the world.

This report, which updates previous United Nations Environment Programme reports published in 2017 and 2020, provides an overview of the current state of climate change litigation and an update on global climate change litigation trends. It provides judges, lawyers, advocates, policymakers, researchers, environmental defenders, climate activists, human rights activists (including women's rights activists), NGOs, businesses and the international community at large with an essential resource to understand the current state of global climate litigation, including descriptions of the key issues that courts have faced in the course of climate change cases.

This report further demonstrates the importance of an environmental rule of law in combating the triple planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. Access to justice enables the protection of environmental law and human rights and promotes accountability in public institutions. The report was launched in conjunction with the anniversary of the United Nations General Assembly's recognition of the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment ([A/RES/76/300](#)), as the majority of cases brought before the courts demonstrate concrete links between human rights and climate change. The UNGA resolution, which recognizes that climate change impacts have negative implications on the enjoyment of all human rights, is likely to drive further action on climate change in the future.

<https://www.unep.org/resources/report/global-climate-litigation-report-2023-status-review>

Humanity in War Podcast

How do the Geneva Conventions apply to modern day armed conflicts, and are they up to the task? What are the core rules and principles of international humanitarian law (IHL), and what are the grey areas? How can we ensure humanitarian policy and diplomacy is shaped and implemented in a way that works for – and with – the people it aims to protect?

Exploring cross-cutting issues from Solferino to cyberwarfare, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is proud to present a new podcast, Humanity in War. Hosted by Elizabeth Rushing, Humanity in War will consult cutting edge thinkers with one overarching question in mind: how can we better leverage international humanitarian law and policy to protect the lives and dignity of people affected by armed conflict and violence?

<https://blogs.icrc.org/law-and-policy/humanity-in-war-podcast/>

In conversation with... Ricardo Luque and Miguel Barriga (en Español)

Adrian Gonzalez (Deputy Editor) entrevista a Ricardo Luque (Oficina de Salud y Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos del Ministerio de Salud y Protección Social, Colombia) y Miguel Barriga (Organización de base comunitaria "Red Somos", Colombia) sobre la situación sanitaria de los migrantes Venezolanos con VIH en Colombia

<https://www.thelancet.com/lanhiv/audio>