

CDC Year in Review: “Mission: Critical”

The 10 most challenging public-health threats of 2014

Press Release

For Immediate Release: Monday, December 15

Contact: Media Relations (<https://web.archive.org/web/20150107172149/http://www.cdc.gov/media>)
(404) 639-3286

It's been an unprecedented year for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as America's public health agency continues its emergency response to the most complex Ebola epidemic in history. Ebola, however, is far from the only critical mission CDC undertook in 2014.

“CDC's Ebola response is the largest global effort in the agency's history, but we're carrying out many other public-health missions crucial to protecting American lives,” said CDC Director Tom Frieden, M.D., M.P.H. “We're taking action on a wide range of health threats.”

In a digital press kit released today, CDC reviews its responses to the 10 most important public-health challenges of 2014:

Mission: New Infectious Disease Threats

1. With 170 staff in the field and more than 700 people working on Ebola at any one time, CDC's response to the ongoing **Ebola** outbreak in West Africa is the largest in the agency's history. “Americans will be 100 percent safe only when we succeed in stopping Ebola at its source in West Africa,” Dr. Frieden said.
2. CDC has made important progress against **antibiotic resistance**, but it remains a serious threat. Combatting antibiotic resistance and preventing **healthcare-associated infections** remains a critical initiative for 2015. “Every day we don't act to better protect antibiotics will make it harder and more expensive to address drug resistance in the future,” said Beth P. Bell, M.D., M.P.H., director of CDC's National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases. “Drug resistance can undermine both our ability to fight infectious diseases and much of modern medicine.”
3. **Enterovirus D-68 (EV-D68)** is a previously rare virus mostly affecting American children, and is particularly severe in children with asthma. CDC's intense investigations into EV-D68 have been sped by a CDC-developed rapid lab test that can for detect the virus. “When rare or uncommon viruses suddenly begin causing severe illness, CDC works quickly to develop diagnostic tests to enhance our response and investigations,” said Anne Schuchat, M.D., Assistant Surgeon General and Director of CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases.

4. **Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV)**, a new viral respiratory illness that was first reported in Saudi Arabia in 2012, showed a dramatic increase in cases during 2014. "In this interconnected world we live in, we expected MERS-CoV to make its way to the United States. We have been preparing since 2012 for this possibility," Dr. Frieden said.

Mission: Continued Fight against Infectious Diseases:

5. The **HIV/AIDS pandemic** continues to be one of the world's most important public health challenges. CDC is a primary partner in the **President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)**, which provides support to more than 60 countries to build capacity for their national HIV/AIDS programs. Through PEPFAR, CDC has helped support life-saving antiretroviral treatment for 7.7 million people and supported HIV testing and counseling for more than 56.7 million people during fiscal year 2014. "The heart of what CDC brings to the fight against AIDS is our ability to share our science and innovation to build capacity across the globe. We are beginning to turn the tide on the HIV pandemic, and saving millions of lives in doing so," Dr. Frieden said.
6. The world is on the brink of **eliminating polio**, but we risk losing hard-won ground. "If we eradicate polio in the next few years, we'll not only eliminate a crippling disease for generations to come, but have an estimated global savings of \$40 billion to \$50 billion over the subsequent 20 years," said Gregory Armstrong, M.D., incident manager for CDC's polio eradication response. "The finish line is in sight and will be a gift to every generation to come."

Mission: Laboratory Safety

7. Laboratory incidents during 2014 raised national awareness of the importance of **laboratory safety**. CDC applied important lessons learned to ensuring its laboratories are safe and effective. "Safety improvement is a continuous process," said Leslie Dauphin, Ph.D. Acting Associate Director for Laboratory Science and Safety. "It is essential that we strive for the highest standards of safety to ensure that CDC labs are the most scientifically rigorous and the safest in the world."

Mission: Leading Causes of Death

8. Nearly 800,000 Americans die each year from **cardiovascular diseases**. In 2014, with support of key partners, the **Million Hearts®** campaign encouraged widespread adoption and use of standardized treatment protocols for improving blood pressure control. "Simple, evidence-based treatment protocols can have a powerful impact in improving blood pressure control and reducing deaths from heart attack and stroke," said Janet S. Wright, M.D., Executive Director of Million Hearts.
9. **Smoking** remains the leading cause of preventable death and disease in the United States, killing more than 480,000 Americans each year. In 2014, CDC continued its national tobacco education campaign -- **Tips from Former Smokers** -- with hard-hitting new ads featuring secondary health conditions people may not realize are related to smoking. "These new ads are powerful. They highlight illnesses and suffering caused by smoking that people don't commonly associate with cigarette use," Dr. Frieden said. "Smokers have told us these ads help them quit by showing what it's like to live every day with disability and disfigurement from smoking."
10. A silent epidemic of **fatal overdose** kills 44 people every day in the US. In 2014 CDC joined with partners to improve prescription monitoring, reducing unnecessary prescriptions. "Prescription drug overdose is epidemic in the United States," Dr. Frieden said. "All too often, and in far too many communities, the treatment is

becoming the problem. States where prescribing rates are highest need to take a particularly hard look at ways to reduce the inappropriate prescription of these drugs that are dangerous when misused or abused.”

Link: <http://www.cdc.gov/media/dpk/2014/dpk-eoy.html>

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20150107172149/http://www.cdc.gov/media/dpk/2014/dpk-eoy.html>).

###

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20150107172149/http://www.hhs.gov/>).

Page last reviewed: December 15, 2014

Page last updated: December 15, 2014

Content source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (/web/20150107172149/https://www.cdc.gov/)