



PLANETARY HEALTH WEEKLY

BRINGING YOU CURRENT NEWS ON GLOBAL HEALTH & ECOLOGICAL WELLNESS

May 18, 2017

<https://planetaryhealthweekly.com>

Volume 3, Number 20

HEALTH OFFICIALS LOOK TO CUT MEDICATION MISTAKES BY HALF

Health officials are making a new global push to slash the rate of medication errors in half over the next five years. Medication errors harm an estimated 1.3 million patients each year in the U.S. alone. Those errors, such as giving a patient an incorrect dose or medication intended for another patient, are blamed on overcrowding, staff shortages, and a lack of training, among other issues. The initiative, spearheaded by the World Health Organization, will work to create guidance and tools for both health providers and patients. In particular, the effort will focus on patients who take multiple medications and drugs that pose a high risk if used incorrectly.

[Read More on STAT](#)



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CHINA'S APPETITE PUSHES FISHERIES TO THE BRINK

Overfishing is depleting oceans across the globe, with 90 percent of the world's fisheries fully exploited or facing collapse, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. From Russian king crab fishermen in the west Bering Sea to Mexican ships that poach red snapper off the coast of Florida, unsustainable fishing practices threaten the well being of millions of people in the developing world who depend on the sea for income and food. But China, with its enormous population, growing wealth to buy seafood and the world's largest fleet of deep-sea fishing vessels, is having an outsize impact on the globe's oceans.

[Read More on The New York Times](#)





WHO Calls for Immediate Action to Save Lives in Somalia

WHO is concerned by the chronic shortage of funding for life-saving work in Somalia in response to the ongoing drought that has plunged the country further towards famine, disease, and health insecurity. Drought in Somalia led to the destruction of crops and livestock, leaving more than 3.3 million people hungry every day. If the current situation continues, famine could soon be a reality, creating a devastating cycle of hunger and disease as the health of people deteriorates and they become more susceptible to infection. Drought has also led to lack of clean water and the largest outbreak of cholera Somalia has seen in the last 5 years, with more than 36,000 cases and almost 690 deaths so far in 2017 alone. WHO commends the Government of the United Kingdom for its leadership in hosting an international conference today to tackle the country's most urgent challenges, and calls on the international community to take decisive action to help avoid a humanitarian catastrophe.

[Read More on World Health Organization](#)

The Hunted

One day in October 2015, Electerio João's brother-in-law called him up and asked him to come "work and earn money." Mr. João, who was 22 at the time, welcomed the opportunity. He was living with his mother in a small mud-brick house in the village of Namina in northern Mozambique. He needed the cash. But he quickly realized that he was going to be the source of cash, not labor. His brother-in-law, working with three of his friends, tied up Mr. João with a rope and took him to the side of a main road, where they planned to sell him for his body parts. Mr. João has albinism. Superstition in Mozambique and nearby countries like Malawi and Tanzania holds that if you have a piece of albinism on you, in the form of a bone or piece of skin, you'll have luck and money. In Mozambique a person with albinism can be worth \$4,000 to \$75,000. Since the end of 2014, dozens of albinos in Mozambique have been kidnapped or murdered, often by family members. In Malawi, 20 albinos have been killed in the same period and hundreds more attacked. In both countries, albinos' graves have been desecrated, with corpses dug up for talismans. Those who aren't abducted or killed face discrimination and live in fear.

[Read More on The New York Times](#)



Just Three Countries Will Control Much of the World's Agriculture

An agricultural mega merger is about to ordain China as a new global leader in genetically modified food. First floated in 2016, a \$43 billion deal that would merge Chinese state-owned agriculture company, ChemChina, and Swiss-owned seed company, Syngenta, promises to recast the world's second largest economy as a biotech titan. The proposed deal is just one of three potential farm mergers that, if approved by regulators, will create the biggest farm business oligopoly in world history and concentrate agricultural power to three countries: the US, Germany, and China. The ChemChina-Syngenta merger is on the cusp of becoming official as regulators in the European Union and the United States this month gave nods of approval. If the ChemChina-Syngenta deal is solidified, it will mark a major moment for China, which lacks enough arable land to grow the crops necessary for feeding a burgeoning population that's consuming more meat and dairy products as its middle class expands.

[Read More on Quartz](#)

[See Also: Six Companies Merge Into the Biggest Farm Business Oligopoly](#)



Fracking Story

The title of which state has the most earthquakes goes to Oklahoma, where research links the oil and gas industry to quakes. Oklahoma recorded 623 earthquakes of magnitude 3.0 or higher in 2016; throughout the 1990s, it felt only 16. The state's largest-ever, a 5.8 magnitude quake felt from Chicago to Denver, hit in September 2016. By comparison, California experienced about 137 in 2016. Activists have blamed this spike in seismic activity on the controversial recent boom in hydraulic fracturing, or "fracking," when fluids are injected at high pressure to fracture underground shale rock and create pathways for oil and gas to escape. But while scientists say fracking may be causing occasional quakes (and associate it with other malaises, often pollution related), they largely agree that the technique itself is responsible for a majority of these induced, or human caused, earthquakes.

[Read More on Journalist's Resource](#)

Can Barnacle Geese Predict the Climate

The breeding grounds of Arctic migratory birds such as the barnacle goose are changing rapidly due to accelerated warming in the polar regions. They won't be able to keep up with this climate change unless they can somehow anticipate it. A research team from the Netherlands Institute of Ecology (NIOO-KNAW) employed computer models to assess the future of the geese and their young. "This is the first study that tests if migratory birds are in any way able to adjust their timing to the accelerated warming in the polar regions. We used a model to show that the availability of enough edible grass to build up reserves for their journey is not a problem for the barnacle geese. It's the unpredictability of the climatic changes in their breeding grounds that spells trouble for them." To establish the barnacle geese's potential for anticipating climate change, the researchers built a model that tracks individual geese as they fly to their breeding grounds in northern Russia and make stopovers along the route. "In the model, the geese have to make a choice each day: stay in their present location and continue to feed, or fly to the next stopover."

[Read More on Science Daily](#)



Lessons From Leatherbacks

Leatherbacks are amazing animals. They are the biggest sea turtle in the world, growing to be more than two meters in length and routinely weighing more than 400 kilograms. They can dive deeper than a kilometer and can hold their breath for more than an hour. They migrate further than any other reptile in the world. You'd think we'd know all there is to know about leatherback sea turtles by now, but we don't. They've been on our planet for more than 150 million years. When tyrannosaurs rex roamed the earth, the leatherback ancestors swam in the oceans. But scientists still don't know lots of seemingly simple things, like how many years a leatherback can live, or where hatchling leatherbacks go from the time they first scramble to the ocean until they have grown to be longer than a metre.

[Read More on Canada Helps](#)



From Harrisburg Come Two Profound Misconceptions About the Paris Agreement

Trump seemed to allude indirectly to funding for the Green Climate Fund, which was rolled out in 2009 and 2010 as part of a push to agree on a global climate pact. The Obama administration supported the GCF through a \$3 billion pledge in 2014. The fund aims to help developing countries lower emissions and deal with the worst impacts of climate change. The relevant passage from Trump's speech in Harrisburg was as follows, "The United States pays billions of dollars while China, Russia, and India have contributed and will contribute nothing." This statement is misguided and misleading. India and China are industrializing countries. In this second claim, Trump said that "The agreement could ultimately shrink America's GDP by \$2.5 trillion over a 10-year period... not with me, folks." Trump's claim appears to draw from a Heritage Foundation report, which looks narrowly at the costs of climate action, without factoring in the enormous cost of doing nothing. This oversight is crucial: If we don't act on climate change quickly, rising seas will cost hundreds of billions to hold back from damaging coastal cities.

[Read More on Brookings](#)

SPOTLIGHT ON POLICY:

Climate Change: The Best New Business Opportunity

The Maldives are subject to just one of the immediate threats of climate change. The 400,000 islanders who call this place home are looking at a future ravaged by rising sea levels. It's not just a matter of flooding either, these islands are sinking. The country's former president, Mohamed Nasheed, was in the midst of a carbon-neutral initiative before being ousted in 2012. Now the country is run by President Abdulla Yameen, who has dropped the country's focus on renewable energy, and instead works on oil relations with Saudis and tourism development. Trump and Trudeau need to stop making decisions that bolster the fossil fuel economy and start making moves that encourage energy businesses to be cleaner and more renewable than their competitors. Otherwise the Maldives will be more than just a cautionary tale. This recommendation doesn't only go to our politicians, we have the power too. Renewable and clean energy is at a tipping point with the potential to be just as lucrative, if not more, than fossil fuels. Climate change has not only become a globally uniting crisis, it has also become a business opportunity.

[Read More on Notable Life](#)



SPOTLIGHT ON INDIGENOUS HEALTH:

First Nations Teens Got Together to Do Something About Commercial Tobacco

Aboriginal teens smoke at a rate of two to three times higher than other teens in British Columbia. Many start smoking cigarettes before they start high school. There are lots of reasons to not pick up that first cigarette. Bad breath! It's not sexy! It's going to slow you down. "We made these videos because someone had to stand up to big tobacco and fight for our health".

[Read More on FNHA](#)



QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“Cultural humility is a process of self-reflection to understand personal and systemic biases and to develop and maintain respectful processes and relationships based on mutual trust. Cultural humility involves humbly acknowledging oneself as a learner when it comes to understanding another’s experience.”

Creating a Climate for Change Resource Booklet

[Read More on FNHA](#)

EVENTSTABLE

DATE	CONFERENCE	LOCATION	REGISTER
June 1-2 July 7-24 Aug 11-14 Sept 22-25	Aboriginal Conferences	Canada	http://aboriginalconferences.ca/
June 12-23	McGill Summer Institute in Infectious Disease and Global Health	Montreal Canada	http://mcgill-idgh.ca/
June 16-18	North American Refugee Health Conference	Toronto Canada	http://www.northamericanrefugeehealth.com/agenda
June 18-22	ICM 2017 Midwives Congress	Toronto Canada	http://www.midwives2017.org



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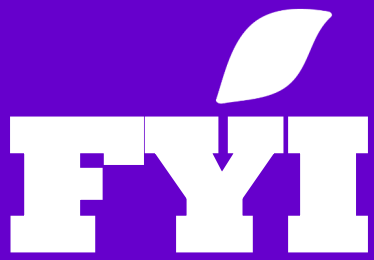


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SEA CHANGE NEEDED FOR LOW-CARBON ECONOMY



“Limiting the rise in global mean temperature to well below two degrees Centigrade (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) would require an energy transition of exceptional scope, death and speed,” a report published by the International Renewable Agency read.

In a list of benchmarks that would contribute to the goals outlines in the Paris climate agreement, the joint report, funded in part of the German government, said 95 percent of electricity would have to come from a low-carbon source and 70 percent of new cars would need to be electric, compared with about 30 percent and 1 percent, respectively, for levels today.

The report from the UN Environment Program found, that a more sustainable use of materials and energy could add \$2 trillion to the global economy by 2050. With the right investment strategy, major new investments are needed, but those investments reflect a small portion of the global gross domestic product. "We are in a good position to transform the global energy system but success will depend on urgent action, as delays will raise the costs of decarbonization," he said in a statement.

[Read More on Solar Daily](#)



WORLD BANK SAYS WORLD IS EXPERIENCING A 'LEARNING CRISIS' FOR SCHOOL LEAVERS



The world is experiencing a “learning crisis” with many poor and vulnerable children still being excluded from school, and many of those who do attend emerging with low literacy and numeracy levels that make it hard to find work, according to a forthcoming World Bank report. Global educators were given a sneak preview of the upcoming 2018 World Development Report during a session at the Civil Society Forum, a series of side events part of the World Bank Spring Meetings in Washington, D.C. The report, titled “Learning to Realize Education’s Promise,” will focus on education for the first time in the history of the institution’s flagship study.

Researchers working on the report said they chose to focus on education because the persistent shortcomings they identify are largely going unacknowledged by governments and the development sector. “We want to make it clear for the development community as a whole this problem of the hidden exclusion and education failing those who need the boost from education the most,” Halsey Rogers, co-director of the forthcoming report, said. The WDR2018, which will be officially launched at the next set of World Bank meetings in October, will address what World Bank Senior Economist Shwetlena Sabarwal described as a “learning crisis” in low- and middle-income countries, where many students are leaving school with low literacy and numeracy levels and without the skills needed to get jobs, she said.

Middle-income countries are also experiencing the learning crisis, Sabarwal said, with attainment levels failing to keep pace with more developed countries. In some instances the highest performing students in middle-income countries perform worse than the lowest performing students in high-income countries, she said. For example, this occurs in Algeria, the Dominican Republic, Republic of Kosovo, and Tunisia, according to the concept note. Talking about some of the causes of this learning crisis, Sabarwal referred to insufficiently prepared teachers and high absenteeism rates; education and training systems that are out of date and not linked to the needs of the economy; and funding that never reaches the classroom. The forthcoming report will argue for an increased emphasis on measuring learning and data, drawing on lessons from within and outside the school system to improve education outcomes, such as looking at health and nutrition of the child and addressing technical and political barriers.

[Read More on Devex](#)



EVIDENCE AND WITNESS STATEMENTS PRESENTED AT THE INTERNATIONAL MONSANTO TRIBUNAL



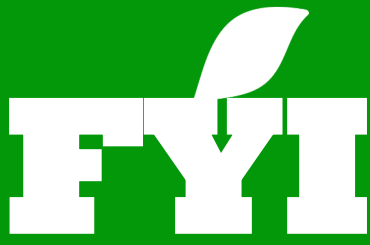
The International Monsanto Tribunal was a unique “Opinion Tribunal” convened by civil society in October, 2016 to clarify the legal obligations and consequences of some of the activities of the Monsanto Company. The judges heard testimonies from witnesses from all over the world, who testified how Monsanto has violated human rights and has committed crimes against the planet by aggressively promoting its products, lobbying politicians and attacking independent scientists.

During the hearings that took place on October 15th and 16th in The Hague, judges heard testimonies related to the six questions posed to the Tribunal. The ensuing legal opinion delivered by the Tribunal includes a legal analysis of the questions asked, with respect to both existing international law, and to prospective law in order to improve international human rights and environmental law. The tribunal concluded that:

- A) Monsanto has violated human rights to food, health, a health environment and the freedom indispensable for independent scientific research;
- B) ‘Ecocide’ should be recognized as a crime in international law, and;
- C) Human rights and environmental laws are undermined by corporate-friendly trade and investment regulation.

In their final conclusion, the judges highlighted the current imbalance in the international system, which offers much better protection to corporations and their financial interests than it does to human rights and the environment.

[Read More on Monsanto Tribunal](#)



CRUISE LINE SLAPPED WITH RECORD PENALTY FOR ILLEGAL DUMPING AND FALSIFYING RECORDS



A major cruise line with ships that call on the Caribbean will have to pay a \$40 million (U.S.) penalty, the largest-ever for crimes involving deliberate vessel pollution. The sentence has been imposed on Princess Cruise Lines Ltd by US District judge in Miami, for illegally dumping oil-contaminated waste overboard and falsifying official logs to conceal the discharges.

The evidence gathered by a whistleblower, led to an inspection of the cruise ship both in England and then when it reached New York on September 14, 2013. During each of the separate inspections certain crew members concealed the illegal activity by lying to the authorities in accordance with orders they had received from Caribbean Princess engineering officers. The sentence also requires that Princess remain on probation for a period of five years during which time all of the related Carnival cruise ship companies trading in the US will be required to implement an environmental compliance plan that includes independent audits by an outside company and oversight by a court appointed monitor. As a result of the government's investigation, Princess has already taken various corrective actions, including upgrading the oily water separators and oil content monitors on every ship in its fleet and instituting many new policies.

The papers filed in court revealed that Princess admitted that after suspecting that the authorities had been informed, senior ship engineers dismantled a pipe bypass and instructed crew members to lie. The cruise line also admitted that following the MCA's inquiry, the chief engineer held a sham meeting in the engine control room to pretend to look into the allegations while holding up a sign stating: "LA is listening." The engineers present understood that anything said might be heard by those at the company's headquarters in Los Angeles, California, because the engine control room contained a recording device intended to monitor conversations in the event of an incident.

Of the US\$40 million penalty, \$10 million is earmarked for community service projects to benefit the maritime environment; \$3 million of the community service payments will go to environmental projects in South Florida; \$1 million will go for projects to benefit the marine environment in United Kingdom waters. Additionally, \$1 million of the criminal penalty will be deposited in the Abandon Seafarer's Fund, a fund established to provide a mechanism for the US Coast Guard to offer humanitarian relief and support of seafarers who are abandoned in the United States and are witnesses to maritime-related crimes.

[Read More on Caribbean 360](#)



FIFTY NEW SPECIES OF SPIDERS DISCOVERED IN NORTH AUSTRALIA



More than 50 new species of spiders, including a peacock spider with a “wonderful courtship behaviour, like dancing”, have been discovered in Queensland Australia’s Cape York region, during a 10-day trip by scientists from the Queensland Museum.

The new arachnids, which are now being formally classified, include a brush footed trap door spider, a large black creature that looks like a funnel web with the added power of being able to walk up glass doors; a new species of swift spider, with fuzzy black and white front legs; and several new species of ant spider. It is the most new spiders ever discovered on a research trip by Bush Blitz, an Australian government funded ecological research body. Bush Blitz has funded 34 similar surveys and discovered almost 1,200 new species since being established four years ago, of which 201 have been spiders.

Dr. Barbara Baehr, a research biologist at the Queensland Museum, said the ecological richness of the area, combined with a successful wet season which had made the area green and thriving, meant they were discovering new species every day. “It’s so vibrant, so many spiders are out there,” she told Guardian Australia. “When you just cup leaf-litter together, it’s crazy.” Baehr is now in the process of describing a number of spiders for formal scientific classification. Over her career she has described 600 new spider species, including 250 new species of ant spider.

There are about 3,500 known species of spiders in Australia and anywhere between 7,000 and 15,000 yet to be formally classified. With the exception of a redback spider or a funnel-web, Baehr said, most will not hurt more than a bee sting, and will not attack at all “if you don’t pinch them.”

[Read More on The Guardian](#)



WHERE WILL YOUR DEGREE TAKE YOU? CAREER PATHS AFTER COLLEGE



A college degree is a worthwhile investment. College graduates enjoy greater earning power on average, about \$600,000 more in lifetime earnings—than workers with only a high school education. However, not all college experiences are equal, as graduates of some majors earn significantly more than graduates of others. Typically, students who have majored in quantitative fields (i.e., STEM) tend to enter more lucrative industries and earn more than students who have studied the arts or humanities. Even so, liberal arts majors, like most graduates, find their ways into a wide variety of occupations with very different earnings levels. In a new Hamilton Project report and accompanying interactive tool, we examine the tremendous diversity of career paths that students within the same college major take after college. We find that college majors relate to graduates' future employment status; gender and age are factors that relate to employment status; and earnings outcomes vary greatly for graduates of the same college major. The online interactive tool draws on data from the American Community Survey and allows users to explore 171 college majors to answer numerous questions, including:

- What are the most common occupations within an undergraduate major?
- What percentage of graduates are working in fields directly related to their college major?
- What percentage of individuals with a particular major are employed full-time, employed part-time, unemployed, or not seeking employment?
- How do career paths and earnings shift, within a college major, when age and gender are taken into account?

While the tremendous diversity of career paths for men and women of all ages is interesting in its own right, it also has practical implications for prospective students and their families.

[Read More on Brookings](#)



**Coal mined in Tete Province, Mozambique by a Brazilian company
travelling about 1000 km on a Chinese built train to the Indian
Ocean coast, then shipped to China and India
Nampula, Mozambique - May 16, 2017**

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Planetary Health Weekly is an e-newsletter published in collaboration with the
Planetary Health Commission at Ryerson University in Toronto, Canada

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