

Summer 2012

Top Stories

Walk This Way

The number of people who have landed in U.S. emergency rooms due to injuries incurred while they were walking and texting, tweeting, playing video games, talking on the phone, or listening to music on headphones, has more than quadrupled in the past seven years, reports the Associated Press. In 2011 alone, almost 1,200 people were treated for distracted walking, a number that is likely a huge understatement since many incidents may not have been reported. But it's more than just bumping into a telephone pole or falling off a curb while texting; researchers found 116 cases where pedestrians were killed or seriously injured while wearing headphones. Two-thirds of those injuries involved men under the age of 30, and half of them involved trains. (*Los Angeles Times*, 7.30.12) Read [more](#) about [pedestrian safety](#).

Fish Get Cancer Too

Researchers have found the first cases of skin cancer in wild marine fish that looks eerily similar to the melanoma that plagues humans. Coral trout living on Australia's Great Barrier Reef are directly beneath the Antarctic ozone hole,



Pedestrian injuries are on the rise, some of them fatal.

the world's largest, which is the result of the depletion of ozone in the atmosphere that normally protects humans from harmful UV rays. Fifteen percent of the trout that were examined from the area showed dark skin lesions ranging in size from small to large, nearly covering the fish's full body. Until now, melanoma caused by UV exposure in fish has only been seen in lab conditions and used as a model for studying human skin cancer. (*Huffington Post*, 8.1.12) Read [more](#) about [skin cancer](#) and [UV rays](#).

Suspensions: Disabled Students

A new study by the Department of Education found that students with disabilities are almost twice as likely to be suspended from school as nondisabled students, with the highest rates among Black children with disabilities. This includes children with learning difficulties, which is disturbing as these children are supposed to be getting additional support and counseling. These findings are causing a stir among policymakers as out of school suspensions are often good indicators of dropout rates and risk of future incarceration. (*NY Times*, 8.7.12) Read [more](#) about [school discipline](#).

Funding Agency News

Schools Cut Mystery Meat

The California Endowment is helping to raise awareness about new nutritional standards for school lunches in the Ventura Unified School District and across California as part of the federal Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act. The new standards increase produce options, ban unhealthy trans fats, reduces sodium and portion size and increases the emphasis on whole grain products. Ventura's efforts include a daily salad bar featuring locally grown produce and new menu options like BBQ chicken salad, chili verde burritos, and pasta primavera – options designed to reflect the tastes of local students. Studies show that there is a strong link between good nutrition and academic performance, in addition to lifelong health benefits. (*The California Endowment*, 8.16.12) Read the [press release](#) and more about [nutrition for adolescents](#), [nutrition in schools](#), and [school wellness policies](#).

Digital Gaming for a Cause

A recent study by The Children's Partnership found that women and children make up the majority of social



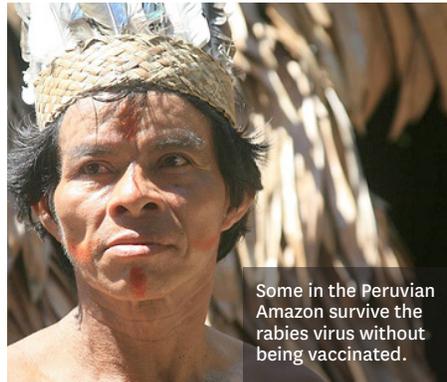
Who We Are

Hollywood, Health & Society is a program of the USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center. HH&S is a free resource for entertainment writers working on health and climate change storylines. The program is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, The California Endowment, the Barr Foundation, The Grantham Foundation, ClimateWorks and the Skoll Global Threats Fund.

gamers today. The average social gamer in America is a 39-year-old woman, and women are the primary decision makers in their family on charitable giving. The study found more than 50 cause partnerships associated with digital games, which could make a meaningful difference in the health and wellbeing of the individuals that use social gaming the most. The findings suggest that game companies are well positioned to improve health and school success while entertaining and educating women and children. (*The California Endowment*, 6.8.12) Read the [press release](#).

Immune Response to Rabies

A recent study found that some people living in two communities in the Peruvian



Some in the Peruvian Amazon survive the rabies virus without being vaccinated.

vian Amazon survived exposure to the rabies virus without being vaccinated. Outbreaks of human rabies infections caused by vampire bat bites have regularly occurred in these two remote areas, suggesting that an immune response

may occur in certain communities where people are regularly exposed to the virus. Although the findings are promising, a series of injections following exposure remains the best way to protect against the infection. (*CDC*, 8.1.12) Read the [press release](#) and more about [rabies](#), its [treatment](#), and [vaccinations](#).



Help for Writers

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Real People, Real Lives

HIV TESTING AT THE DMV Angela Byrde, 27, is getting only the second HIV test of her life—at the Department of Motor Vehicles. Even better, she's getting paid for it—\$7 to take a mouth swab, and they hold your place in line. An innovative new program in Washington, D.C. is offering HIV tests in grocery stores, high schools, street corners where addicts gather, and the DMV in the effort to find the estimated 5,000 residents who are infected but do not know it. Infection rates in Washington were so high that they were compared to those in Africa—Black middle-aged gay and bisexual men are hardest hit with a 30% infection rate. But these new programs are paying off - patients are being found in earlier stages of their illness, when it is more treatable, and 89% of those who test positive see a doctor within three days. (*NY Times*, 7.21.12) Read more about [HIV](#), [transmission](#), [treatment](#), and [testing](#).

DIRTY SKIES University of Michigan professor Paul Mohai and two of his colleagues went to Riverview High School to make a presentation about the link between air pollution and low academic performance. The nauseating

petrochemical smell spewing from the nearby Marathon oil refinery along I-75 was very prominent in the room. Mohai's study shows evidence that children of color and children of poor parents are placed at a disadvantage from the start—Black and Hispanic students, as well as kids from low-income families, are the ones most likely to be enrolled in schools that are in close proximity to sources of pollution. Mohai hopes these findings will influence state and local officials when making decisions about where to place schools. (*Metro Times*, 8.22.12) Read more about [air pollution](#).

LAKE AMEOBA INFECTS 9-YEAR-OLD A Minnesota lake is blocked off with “Danger” and “Stay out of the water” signs after Jack Ariola-Erenberg, a nine-year old who should have started hockey camp this September, died from a rare brain infection after swimming in the lake. A rare parasitic amoeba called *Naegleria fowleri*, which thrives in warm water, enters the body when water gets into the nose and crawls up the olfactory nerve into the brain. With heat waves and droughts striking across the country, high temperatures and low water levels are a perfect breeding ground for the parasite. There have been 125 cases in the past 50 years—all but one fatal. (*NY Daily News*, 8.9.12) Read more about [Naegleria fowleri](#), [water-borne parasites](#), and [healthy swimming in recreational water](#).



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