



Australian Government
Department of Health
and Aged Care

TODAY'S NEWS

Sunday, 14th January 2024

A more automated version of *Today's News* will be provided on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day. It will still capture the main media stories, but will not include an Executive Summary. The report will be emailed to subscribers at the later time of 7:30 am.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The [Sunday Telegraph \(page 5\)](#) reports that the federal government is injecting an extra \$188.5 million in funding to the Australian Border Force to help halt the import of illicit tobacco, with Federal Health Minister Mark Butler saying that reducing the availability of tobacco will bring down the number of smokers in Australia.
- The [Sunday Telegraph \(page 9\)](#) reports that Federal Health Minister Mark Butler will launch the Beforeplay campaign on Sunday, which is designed to reduce the stigma around sexual health testing and preventing sexually transmitted infections.
- The [Sunday Age \(page 7\)](#) reports that the Burnet Institute has found that Australia's aggressive Covid-response policy reduced the fatality rate to 33 times lower than the UK and 46 times lower than the US. During 2022-23, Australia's global average fatality rate multiplied 18-fold as it switched to a "living with Covid" strategy.

- The [Sunday Times \(page 5\)](#) reports that WAHealth has recorded 12 Covid-related deaths in the first week of 2024, with infections and hospital admissions on the rise due to the virality of the JN.1 strain.
- The [ABC \(online\)](#) reports that there are currently no recorded statistics for the amount of traffic-related injuries sustained during 2023, the highest fatality year in five years, with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare set to release a report on the number of 2022-23 injuries halfway through the year.

MINISTER BUTLER

Vapes of wrath: The gangs that prey on kids

Sunday Telegraph, General News, 14/01/2024, Ben Butler, Page 8

The same Middle East organised crime groups that dominate the lucrative illegal tobacco industry are fuelling a vaping boom that preys on children, the Australian Border Force says. [...] Health Minister Mark Butler has allocated the ABF \$25m over two years to fund the crackdown.

Also reported by: [Sunday Tasmanian \(Hobart\)](#), [Sunday Herald Sun \(Melbourne\)](#), [Sunday Mail Adelaide \(Adelaide\)](#), [Sunday Mail Brisbane \(Brisbane\)](#).

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Smoking out illicit cigs

Sunday Telegraph, General News, 14/01/2024, James Campbell, Page 5

A major crackdown on black market tobacco will see state and territory governments working with the Commonwealth to target smuggling and the open sale of illegally imported cigarettes. [...] Health Minister Mark Butler said reducing the availability of illicit tobacco is critical to reducing the number of people who smoke in Australia.

Also reported by: [Sunday Tasmanian \(Hobart\)](#), [Sunday Mail Brisbane \(Brisbane\)](#), [Sunday Mail Adelaide \(Adelaide\)](#), [Sunday Herald Sun \(Melbourne\)](#).

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Get 'fun parts' tested

Sunday Telegraph, General News, 14/01/2024, Page 9

Tinder and Grindr will be used as part of a fresh push to encourage Aussies to get their "fun parts" tested amid a concerning rise in sexually transmitted diseases. Health Minister Mark Butler will launch the Beforeplay campaign on Sunday in a bid to encourage young Aussies to take their sexual health seriously.

Also reported by: [Sunday Herald Sun \(Melbourne\)](#), [Sunday Mail Brisbane \(Brisbane\)](#), [Weekly Times Now \(Online\)](#), [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#), [Northern Territory News \(Online\)](#), [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [Herald Sun \(Online\)](#), [NEWS.com.au \(Online\)](#), [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#), [The Australian \(Online\)](#).

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Australia in grips of mammoth Covid-19 wave, but experts offer a silver lining

NEWS.com.au, Other, 13/01/2024, Ellen Ransley

Australia is unlikely to return to widespread mask mandates, experts say, despite the country grappling with a surge of Covid-19 cases. In some states, Covid-19 cases are higher than they were last winter, with two highly infectious strains of the virus circulating among the community and hospitalisations increasing. [...] Federal Health Minister Mark Butler said there was evidence to show JN. 1 was linked to increased hospitalisations, and "no evidence yet to show that it is any more transmissible or severe than the myriad other Omicron sub-variants that we've all been grappling with over the last couple of years".

Also reported by: [Northern Territory News \(Online\)](#), [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [Herald Sun \(Online\)](#), [Sky News Australia \(Online\)](#), [The Australian \(Online\)](#), [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#), [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#), [West Australian \(Online\)](#).

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MINISTER WELLS

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DEPARTMENT

Covid antiviral uptake rising

Australian Journal of Pharmacy, Other, 13/01/2024, William Stevenson

Record number of Australian patients accessing antiviral treatments for Covid-19 December marked a record month for Covid antiviral use in Australia, with more than 93,000 patients receiving the medications, Chief Medical Officer, Professor Paul Kelly, reports Speaking on ABC News Breakfast on Friday (12 January) about the latest Covid variant (JN1), which has been associated with

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Amana Living's Edward Collick Home declares COVID outbreak, with 10 positive residents

West Australian, Other, 13/01/2024, Carwyn Monck

A COVID outbreak at Amana Living's Edward Collick Home was declared on January 2 when six residents tested positive for the virus. [...] According to the Department of Health and Aged Care's weekly report, as of January 4, there were 229 active resident cases across the State in 41 WA residential aged-care facilities with active outbreaks.

Also reported by: [Broome Advertiser \(Online\)](#), [Manjimup-Bridgetown Times \(Online\)](#), [Narrogin Observer \(Online\)](#), [Kimberley Echo \(Online\)](#), [Pilbara News \(Online\)](#), [North West Telegraph \(Online\)](#).

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CORONAVIRUS

'Thousands of lives' saved by COVID curbs

Sunday Age, General News, 14/01/2024, Lisa Visentin, Page 7

The Burnet Institute says Australia's aggressive approach to suppressing COVID-19 in the first two years of the pandemic has been vindicated in saving thousands of lives, leading to a death rate 33 times lower than the United Kingdom and 46 times lower than the United States. But Australia lost its relative global advantage during 2022 and 2023 when excess deaths reached 31,000, an 18-fold increase compared to the first two years an outcome it attributes in part to the shift by governments to "living with COVID" without clear transmission-reduction strategies.

Also reported by: [Sun Herald \(Sydney\)](#), [Sydney Morning Herald \(Online\)](#).

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What does the future look like for COVID-19?

Sunday Canberra Times, General News, 14/01/2024, Steve Robson, Page 12

In 2024, the world at the threshold of its fifth year dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, and the holiday season has coincided with the eighth major wave of infections. Most infections now are due to the globally dominant JN.1 type of virus. Its new variant - BA.2.86 - known as "Pirola" seems to infect the deep lung tissues with great efficiency just as the early, pre-Omicron, strains did.

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12 COVID deaths in first week of 2024

Sunday Times, General News, 14/01/2024, John Flint, Page 5

There were 12 COVID-related deaths in the first seven days of 2024, the latest WA Health data reveals. New hospital admissions related to the disease increased from 47 to 61 during the same period, but direct intensive care unit admissions decreased with just two people needing such care.

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Queensland GPs flooded with patients reporting heart problems after long Covid

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 13/01/2024, Jackie Sinnerton

Doctors are seeing more patients with myocarditis and pericarditis due to inflammation caused by the virus that can cause palpitations chest pain or shortness of breath. "We are now seeing the impact of long Covid which makes it clear that Queenslanders should be more aware of taking precautions.

Also reported by: [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [Northern Territory News \(Online\)](#), [Toowoomba Chronicle \(Online\)](#), [Cairns Post \(Online\)](#), [Geelong Advertiser \(Online\)](#), [Sunday Mail Brisbane \(Brisbane\)](#).

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'Stay home' if sick: health advice for Tamworth Country Music Festival

Northern Daily Leader, Other, 13/01/2024, Rachel Gray

People with a cough, sore throat, fever, or other respiratory tract infections are being urged to stay home during the Tamworth Country Music Festival as the region grapples with a surge in COVID cases. Hunter New England Health District (HNELHD) acting director Dr Peter Murray said experts had seen higher transmission levels of the COVID subvariant JN.

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AGEING AND AGED CARE

Tassie aged care residents peg 1300 water balloons at staff

Sunday Examiner, General News, 14/01/2024, Hamish Geale, Page 6

A water fight of mass proportions is set to become an annual tradition at a Tasmanian aged care home. The gardens at Uniting AgeWell Newnham became a soggy battleground as residents pegged 1300 water balloons at staff. A 'Best Shot' trophy was up for grabs for the resident who hit the most staff members, while the thirteen targets - including nurses, carers, lifestyle staff and the chaplain - donned special outfits in pursuit of the inaugural 'Least Wet' trophy.

Aged care residents face serious barriers to mental health treatments

The Senior, Other, 13/01/2024, Eileen Wood

Entering aged care is challenging. Giving up your independence, perhaps leaving a spouse and your home with only a few very precious possessions, to live in a strange environment with people you don't know. It's estimated more than 40 per cent of aged care residents have significant levels of depression, anxiety, and other mental health difficulties, yet less than three per cent access to government-subsidised psychological help.

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POPULATION HEALTH

How to get a \$60 rebate for your NY resolutions

Sun Herald, Business News, 14/01/2024, Nicole Pedersen-McKinnon, Page 41

Common wisdom has it that New Year's resolutions last 12 days. So your conscience could be clear now and it may be almost another year before you think about being good again. [...] Indeed, the most recent Australian Institute of Health and Welfare figures show exercise physiology is the fourth most popular category of care plan, with 163,100 people receiving subsidised services in 2019, behind podiatry with 1.13 million, physiotherapy with 887,317 and dietetics with 264,016.

Also reported by: [Sunday Age \(Melbourne\)](#), [Sydney Morning Herald \(Online\)](#).

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Crime's pay small

Sunday Herald Sun, General News, 14/01/2024, Regan Hodge and Laura Placella, Page 1

Police are concerned organised crime gangs fighting for control of the illicit tobacco market are using messaging platforms to recruit youth members to carry out their dirty work. Middle Eastern organised crime figures and outlaw motorcycle gangs are paying youths small amounts of cash to carry out crimes such as carjackings, police say.

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'It will probably kill me'

Sunday Telegraph, General News, 14/01/2024, Julie Cross, Page 9

Jacob Le started vaping at 15 and is now hooked. The 19-year-old medical student from Western Sydney is on a waiting list, several months long, to see a doctor who can prescribe nicotine and help wean him off e-cigarettes.

Also reported by: [Sunday Mail Brisbane \(Brisbane\)](#), [Sunday Tasmanian \(Hobart\)](#).

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They know it's bad but still risk it

Sunday Telegraph, General News, 14/01/2024, Julie Cross, Page 9

Young people say it is easy to get hooked on vaping, with nearly half of those who have tried it saying they are or have been addicted. An exclusive survey of 15 to 24-year-old Aussies found a quarter have vaped and more than one in six vapers spent \$100 a month on the habit.

Also reported by: [Sunday Mail Adelaide \(Adelaide\)](#).

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Behind the nation's road toll is a growing list of patients now living with life-changing injuries

ABC Online, Other, 13/01/2024, Natalie Whiting

In the bustling hallway of a trauma ward, Kate Martin flips the pages closed on a patient's file after a

quick consultation with her team. "Ok, fabulous, moving along, cracking on." [...] The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare will release a report on injuries for the 2022-2023 financial year in the middle of this year, but there are variations in how data is collected.

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RACGP wants funding for GPs doing NDIS paperwork

Australian Doctor, Other, 13/01/2024, Carmel Sparke

The college wants GPs remunerated under Medicare. The RACGP wants GPs remunerated under Medicare for helping patients navigate the complexities of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, including for time spent on paperwork done outside consultations. [...] One in six people in Australia, or about 4.4 million people, have a disability, according to Australian Institute of Health and Welfare figures.

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CANCER, HEARING AND CHRONIC CONDITIONS

Cancer check-ups urged despite cost of living pressure

Daily Mail Australia, Other, 13/01/2024

Imagination is required to come up with novel methods of encouraging better health care among men, with only so many ways experts can say the same thing. New research revealing that cost of living pressures have become a hurdle to Australians seeking regular medical check-ups is making that task a no-brainer.

Also reported by: [Newcastle Herald \(Online\)](#), [The Senior \(Online\)](#), [Canberra Times \(Online\)](#), [West Australian \(Online\)](#), [Illawarra Mercury \(Online\)](#).

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PRIMARY CARE

Wait times for some consultations cut dramatically but others are continuing to grow in an alarming rate

The Mercury, Other, 13/01/2024, Brad Crouch

It may still be more than five years to see some public hospital specialists for a consultation, but the good news is some specialties have carved up to 37 months off the wait time. New data shows some dramatic falls in waiting times to see a public hospital specialist for a consultation, although in some cases it is still years.

Also reported by: [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#), [Townsville Bulletin \(Online\)](#).

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MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

Doing it for the kids

Sunday Canberra Times, General News, 14/01/2024, Lanie Tindale, Page 1

The Psych Hive in Deakin feels more like a Home Beautiful spread than a doctors office. It is the culmination of a dream of three psychologists who wanted to create a neurodiversity-affirming practice. In this office, neurodivergent children and adults are healed and helped, not changed or "fixed" co-founder Brianna Thomas says. Ms Thomas' passion for embracing neurodiversity comes from a personal place. She was diagnosed with autism and attention deficit and hyperactive disorder (ADHD) as an adult.

Mental hell on the frontline

Sunday Mail Adelaide, General News, 14/01/2024, Bella Fowler, Page 26

As police come to terms with the shock recent death of a female officer in Port Adelaide, a former cop has called for more "appropriate" support services for first responders. Matt Newlands, the director of Frontline Mental Health, says "standard, off-the-shelf mental health first aid" doesn't cut it.

Also reported by: [Cairns Post \(Online\)](#), [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#), [Northern Territory News \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#), [Townsville Bulletin \(Online\)](#), [Geelong Advertiser \(Online\)](#).

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Worry over screen time

Sunday Tasmanian, General News, 14/01/2024, Sue Bailey, Page 1

In the battle to get children off their electronic devices, frustrated parents and carers are turning to experts for help. Clinical psychologist Cassie Xintavelonis, who works with children and young adolescents, said controlling screen time was a problem for many parents.

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Men paddle across Bass Strait to raise awareness about mental health, collect funds for Black Dog Institute

ABC Online, Other, 13/01/2024, Millicent Spencer and Mim Hook

Five men from Sydney's North Shore have arrived in Tasmania after crossing the Bass Strait in gruelling conditions, aiming to draw attention to youth depression. Edward Hosken, 20, Ben Taylor, 23, Tim Taylor, 22, Jono Hargreaves, 21, and Matt Taubam, 19, completed the 320-kilometre journey from Port Welshpool, Victoria, to Flinders Island in Tasmania to raise money for the Black Dog Institute in memory of their mate Dan, who died by suicide, aged 17.

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Parenting expert Justin Coulson opens up on life after suicide of nephew Logan Steinwede

Gold Coast Bulletin, Other, 13/01/2024, Kylie Lang

The shocking death of a well-known surfer and "super happy kid" will forever haunt his devastated family, his mother and parenting expert uncle telling of the cruel ripple effect of a suicide neither saw coming. Logan Steinwede died on November 6, leaving the 20-year-old's loved ones without answers. All that remains is grief – crashing into them like the waves Logan once conquered.

Also reported by: [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#).

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Blue Healers: Emergency help for cops on the edge

The Courier Mail, Other, 13/01/2024, Cydonee Mardon

A team of mental health clinicians was rushed to Nowra this week to support the officers who were forced to shoot a man dead after the siege at a medical clinic, as the NSW Police Force doubled down on its commitment to better support its workforce. Three mental health clinicians joined the worker already embedded at Nowra Police Station to help counsel the officers involved in the tense stand-off with Alexander Stuart Pinnock, who threatened a doctor with what appeared to be a Glock pistol on Wednesday.

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NSW police fail to deliver mental health crisis review amid scrutiny over latest shooting death

The Guardian, Other, 13/01/2024, Catie McLeod and Tamsin Rose

New South Wales police have failed to hand a promised review of the way they respond to mental health crises to the government, as pressure again mounts on the force to enact reforms after the fatal shooting of a mentally unwell man. Alexander Stuart Pinnock died on Wednesday after being shot at by

multiple officers outside a medical clinic in Nowra on the south coast following an almost two-hour standoff that began when the 34-year-old pulled out a gun, police said.

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CHIEF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY OFFICE

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HEALTH WORKFORCE

Doctors shun a GP career

Sunday Mail Adelaide, General News, 14/01/2024, Brad Crouch, Page 21

After losing four female GPs in just 12 months, Woodcroft Medical Centre director John Pakos says he may have no choice but to close the clinic, leaving its 5000 patients to find care elsewhere. The clinic is down to three GPs two of them part-time and Dr Pakos said despite advertising for a year he has not been able to fill the vacancies.

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An army of new ambos for bush

Sunday Telegraph, General News, 14/01/2024, Madeline Crittenden, Page 13

More than 100 new paramedics will start work in regional and rural communities across the state this year to improve healthcare in the bush. The Minns government said the move is proof it is delivering on its election commitment for additional regional paramedics, with the first cohort beginning their six-week induction programs this month.

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Emergency Department nurses of Flinders Medical Centre drive wellbeing initiatives

Australian Nursing & Midwifery Journal, Other, 13/01/2024, Anmj Staff

Each Friday, nurses working in the Emergency Department at Flinders Medical Centre in South Australia don vibrant scrubs to uplift the mood in the consistently hectic and high-stress ward. This uncomplicated gesture to boost morale is just one of numerous initiatives led by ED nurses to enhance the overall health and wellbeing of staff members.

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156 nursing and midwifery graduates join Townsville HHS

The Mercury, Other, 13/01/2024, Bethany Westwood

The city has welcomed a record number of nursing and midwife graduates ready to begin their careers at Townsville University Hospital. Chief Executive of Townsville Hospital and Health (THH) services, Kieran Keyes, said the job is a privileged profession and celebrates the influx of 156 nursing and midwifery graduates coming through the hospital's doors.

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SPORT

Federal push on airport rail link

Sunday Mail Brisbane, General News, 14/01/2024, Madura McCormack , Page 5

The federal government has called for a significant overhaul of public transport to and from Brisbane Airport, to prevent the controversial Airtrain being the only option for the 2032 Olympic Games. The intervention has prompted Premier Steven Miles to ask his new Transport Minister Bart Mellish to assess the situation "as a priority", after former transport minister Mark Bailey's negotiations with Airtrain to cut short its 35year contract broke down.

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HEALTH ECONOMICS AND RESEARCH

Risk and reward of AI challenge must be faced

Sun Herald, Editorials, 14/01/2024, Page 38

The consensus of thinking around artificial intelligence (AI) is that 2024 is the year when we will really start to feel its impact. [...] Researchers are now exploring whether AI can be used to interpret the results of bowel cancer scans faster and more accurately than a human.

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FIRST NATIONS HEALTH

A boon for Indigenous housing

Sun Herald, General News, 14/01/2024, Parnell Palme McGuinness, Page 39

Putting 99-year leases on native title land will be a historic step, writes Parnell Palme McGuinness. Just when it seemed the Albanese government had chucked in the towel on improving the lives of Indigenous Australians after the failed Voice referendum, there was an exciting development Labor would help with homes and businesses in remote areas. Minister for Resources and Northern Australia Madeleine King has backed the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility co-investing with the

Indigenous people of Bidyadanga, Western Australia's most remote Indigenous community, to support private housing aspirations and business ventures.

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Trust is key to the Kimberley crisis

West Australian, Other, 13/01/2024, Daniel Morrison-Bird

There is little doubt that the alcohol and drug issues plaguing the Kimberley are doing significant harm to the community, and to families. Although I've never lived in the region (I'm a proud Noongar, Gija and Yamitji man), I have roots in the Kimberley and family who still call it home.

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OFFICE OF HEALTH PROTECTION AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Woman left in critical condition following suspected drug overdose at Juicy Fest

ABC Online, Other, 13/01/2024

A woman is in a critical condition after a suspected drug overdose at a Melbourne music festival, just a week after nine people were treated for drug overdoses in the same location. Ambulance Victoria said a woman believed to be in her 30s was treated by paramedics at about 7pm on Friday night at Juicy Fest in Flemington, and was in a critical condition.

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Cholera cases soar globally amid shortage of vaccines

The Guardian, Other, 13/01/2024, Weronika Strzyzyska

Cholera cases soared last year, according to preliminary data from the World Health Organization, which recorded 4,000 cholera deaths and 667,000 cases globally. The numbers surpassed that of 2022, and the WHO has classified the global resurgence of cholera as a grade 3 emergency, its highest internal health emergency level.

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MDMA overdose: nine people hospitalised after Melbourne music festival had severe hyperthermia

The Guardian, Other, 13/01/2024, Henry Belot

All nine people hospitalised after a mass drug overdose at an electronic music festival in Melbourne last weekend suffered severe hyperthermia, with three people remaining in a critical condition. Victorian health authorities believe the overdoses at the Hardmission festival were not caused by a single bad batch of the drug MDMA as originally feared and that extreme heat and physical activity exacerbated the drug's impact.

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THERAPEUTIC GOODS ADMINISTRATION

Woman will suffer diarrhea forever after Ozempic caused horror bowel injury - and weight loss drug made another vomit until her teeth fell out, claim dozens of lawsuits saying maker failed to warn of its dangers

Daily Mail Australia, Other, 13/01/2024, Lewis Pennock

Novo Nordisk, the maker of Ozempic and Wegovy, has been hit with dozens of lawsuits from patients who suffered stomach paralysis after using the drugs. Patients told DailyMail.com they weren't warned

about the risks, which left some with life-long injuries, and attorneys said 'thousands' more lawsuits will be filed.

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