

USACHPPM
HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE

03 January 2003

The HIO Update provides information regarding global medical and veterinary issues of interest to the United States (US) Army. The update does not attempt to analyze the information regarding potential strategic or tactical impact to the US Army and as such, should not be regarded as a medical intelligence product. Medical intelligence products are available at <http://mic.afmic.detrick.army.mil/>. The information in the HIO Update should provide an increased awareness of current and emerging health-related issues.

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HOT ISSUES

Black Tea May Lower Heart Disease Risks

01 January – Reuters reported drinking tea could be key to a longer, healthier life, according to recent research. A study of over 3,400 adults in Saudi Arabia--a country of tea-lovers--found that those who drank more than 6 cups per day of tea had a more than 50% lower risk of coronary heart disease compared to tea abstainers, even after adjusting for other factors such as smoking, diet and obesity. Antioxidants called flavonoids, found in both green and black teas, are thought to be potent weapons in the fight against heart disease. "Tea, the most widely consumed beverage in the world, is a rich source of (these) antioxidants," explain researchers led by Dr. Iman A. Hakim of the University of Arizona in Tucson. The study is published in the January issue of the journal Preventive Medicine. [View Article](#)

Combat Experience Batters Marriage

19 December – Health Scout News reported combat veterans are 62 percent more likely than other men to have marriages that end in separation or divorce, says a Brigham Young University study. The research appears in the December issue of Armed Forces and Society. The study identified combat experience as an important risk factor for divorce or separation. Traumatic experiences such as combat seem to have a lasting impact on a person's ability to form and maintain successful relationships. The researchers compared divorce and separation rates between armed forces veterans who had experienced combat and those who hadn't been in combat. They found the rates for failed marriages were highest for Korean War veterans, not for Vietnam War veterans. The study found that Korean War veterans were 45 percent more

likely to divorce than non-veterans of their era, while Vietnam War veterans were 28 percent more likely to divorce than their non-veteran peers. [View Article](#)

First West Nile Prenatal Case Confirmed

19 December – CNN reported a month-old baby with West Nile virus was infected before she was born in the country's first documented intrauterine transmission of the disease. The case surprised health officials who had believed the virus could not be passed from pregnant mothers to their unborn children. The baby girl was born with abnormalities, including loss of brain matter, but it was not yet clear whether that was related to the infection, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said. "We're not recommending screening of pregnant mothers," said Novick, whose department reported the Syracuse case to the CDC. "But since this is the first time this has happened, people have to be clinically aware of the possibility in the future." [View Article](#)

Fish Consumption Can Lower Risk of Stroke

24 December - VOA News reported a new U.S. medical study shows that eating just a small amount of fish each month can dramatically lower the risk of stroke. That fish is healthy for your circulatory system is no surprise. Many studies over the years have found that stroke and heart disease rates are lower among people who make fish a regular part of their diet. Just look at Iceland and Japan, where fish consumption is the highest per person in the world. People in those countries have the lowest death rates from stroke and heart disease and, in fact, from all causes of mortality. With the benefits of fish well known, a question has remained about how much fish consumption is necessary to achieve them. A study in the Journal of the American Medical Association shows that very little is necessary at least to prevent stroke. "There seemed to be no benefit in eating fish very frequently," said physician Albert Ascherio. Dr. Ascherio and colleagues at the Harvard University School of Public Health examined the diets of more than 40 thousand men aged 40-75 over 12 years. They found that eating just two small servings of fish each month reduces the risk of stroke significantly. [View Article](#)

Global Warming Emissions in Biggest Decade Drop

20 December – Reuters reported U.S. greenhouse gas emissions linked to global warming fell by 1.2 percent last year, the largest decrease in a decade, due in part to slow economic growth and a milder winter, the government said. Last year's decline was in sharp contrast to the average 1.3 percent annual growth rate in U.S. emissions from 1990 to 2000 and was twice the level of the only other drop since 1990 -- a 0.6 percent decline in 1991 -- according to a report from the Energy Information Administration. Still, U.S. greenhouse gas emissions in 2001 were 11.9 percent higher than in 1990, the EIA said. [View Article](#)

Herbal Treatment Shows Promise Against Prostate Cancer

20 December – Health Scout News reported an herbal formula, Zyflamend, may offer new treatment and prevention options for prostate cancer patients, say Columbia University researchers. The formula, a combination of 10 different herbs, suppressed the growth of prostate cancer cells and caused many cells to self-destruct in lab experiments, report the researchers. They presented their findings at a recent meeting of the Society of Urologic Oncology at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Md. "This is a natural product that

contains herbs and spices and in our lab studies seems to have an effect on the cancer we looked at," says one of the study's authors "The compound needs future research on the clinical side, but it holds the potential for prevention and reducing PSA (prostate-specific antigen) levels." Zyflamend is made with a combination of turmeric, ginger, holy basil, hu zhang, Chinese goldthread, barberry, oregano, rosemary, green tea and Scutellaria baicalensis. [View Article](#)

Monkey AIDS Vaccine Reduces Virus

23 December – CNN reported an experimental vaccine against the monkey form of AIDS sharply reduced but did not eliminate the amount of the virus in the animals' blood. Evidence of the virus in the blood cells of macaques dropped 50-fold and its evidence in plasma fell 1,000-fold in the test that lasted 10 months, said researcher Wei Lu of Rene Descartes University in Paris, who led the team that studied the animals. Unlike the preventive vaccines used to keep people and animals from catching a disease, this work deals with a therapeutic vaccine given to an infected person or animal in hopes of helping them fight the disease by increasing their immune response. The findings, focusing on SIV -- the monkey form of HIV, the AIDS virus that affects humans -- were being published in the online edition of the journal Nature Medicine. "This study has opened the possibility of treating HIV infection" using immune cells that have been exposed to a weakened form of virus, Lu reported. [View Article](#)

Pain-free Syringes Developed

22 December – BBC News reported scientists have developed a tiny hypodermic syringe that can be used to give virtually pain-free injections. The breakthrough could potentially be very good news for people with conditions such as diabetes, who require daily injections of insulin to manage their condition. Japanese medical equipment maker Terumo Corporation has developed a prototype needle that is just 0.2 millimeters (0.008 inches) in diameter. Many people feel almost no twinge of pain with this needle. It uses a tapering technique to administer a flow of drugs through an extremely fine tip. No super-thin hypodermic syringes had been developed until now for fear that they could not guarantee full, uninterrupted flow of liquid medicine. The company hopes the needle will be commercially available for purchase within the next five or six years. [View Article](#)

Rapid Viral Test Reduces Inappropriate Antibiotic Use in Children

23 December – Reuters reported the use of a recently developed test, which can rapidly detect the presence of seven common respiratory viruses, could reduce inappropriate antibiotic treatment in children, according to a report published in the December issue of the Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine. The test is a direct fluorescent assay (DFA) that can determine whether respiratory syncytial virus, influenza A and B, parainfluenza viruses 1, 2, and 3, and adenovirus are present in a nasal wash specimen. The assay is sold by Temecula, California-based Chemicon International Inc. under the trade name SimulFluor Respiratory Screen. The advantage of the test is that it provides rapid results, usually within a few hours of specimen collection. Therefore, a physician can quickly decide whether antibiotics are warranted instead of treating the patient prophylactically while awaiting culture results. [View Article](#)

Sewage Toxins Might Get in Food

18 December – CNN reported French scientists fear that pollutants from industrial sewage that contaminate soil could be entering the food chain. Researchers at the University of Franche-Comte in Besancon discovered that snails placed in a container filled with soil from a disused lead and zinc smelter had increased levels of cadmium in their bodies. Scientists had thought that organisms would only be able to take up heavy metals and pollutants if they are dissolved or suspended in water percolating through the soil but the French research suggests the assumption is wrong. The study suggests that pollutants such as cadmium, which can cause kidney damage, anemia and bone problems, could be entering the food chain. [View Article](#)

Study Finds Cars Relatively Safe in Tornadoes

20 December – HealthScoutNews reported a new study finds that cars are less likely than mobile homes to be moved or damaged by tornado-force winds. "People do die in vehicles, of course. That's a very vivid image that sticks in your mind," said Thomas Schmidlin, a co-author of the study. "But it turns out that most of them are not crumpled and blown around and most of them are drivable even at sites where people are killed in mobile homes." Schmidlin, a professor of geography at Kent State University in Ohio, and his colleagues don't suggest cars are the safest places to be in a twister -- far from it. But they're better than either trailers or being outside and exposed. "We're recommending that [people in mobile homes] go out, get into their vehicle, buckle in, and drive to some prearranged sturdy building," he said. "We see the vehicle as a means to getting to better shelter." [View Article](#)

Study Questions Drug as Shield Against Ulcers

26 December - The widely used arthritis drug Celebrex does not protect the stomach from dangerous bleeding ulcers as well as thought, a study suggests. Celebrex and two similar new anti-inflammatory drugs are heavily advertised as being safer for arthritis patients based on earlier research that found they caused fewer ulcers and other gastrointestinal complications than older anti-inflammatory medicines. Together, the three new drugs have annual sales exceeding \$6 billion. Their safety has been called into question by a study, reported in the New England Journal of Medicine that focused on arthritis patients at high risk of recurrent ulcers. It showed that nearly 10 percent each year would develop another bleeding ulcer. The study found the same for an older anti-inflammatory drug, diclofenac, combined with the ulcer medicine Prilosec, which doctors often give arthritis patients to protect their stomachs. Neither treatment protected as many patients from dangerous kidney complications as past studies had showed, the researchers, in Hong Kong, said. [View Article](#)

West Nile's Widening Toll

28 December – The Washington Post reported scientists are beginning to take stock of West Nile virus's North American invasion, and they are taken aback by the scale and sweep of its ecological impact. While the human toll dominated the nation's attention this year -- the virus killed at least 241 people and infected many thousands more -- the effects on wildlife were far worse. The virus swept westward with alarming rapidity this year, appearing in almost every state in the nation -- an astonishing expansion for a bug that had never been seen in the Western Hemisphere until three years ago. Equally unexpected, nearly 200 species of birds, reptiles and mammals fell ill from West Nile this year, including rabbits and reindeer, pelicans and bats, even a few dogs and cats. The virus also slammed dozens of exotic species in about 100 U.S. zoos, killing cockatiels, emus, seals, flamingos and penguins. Florida alligator farms

lost more than 200 of the reptiles. Indeed, the epidemic has so resembled a bioterrorism attack that the nation's zoos -- which spearheaded an effort to track West Nile's march and mount emergency vaccinations -- could end up with potentially important roles in the emerging arena of homeland security. Just last month, in a hastily organized effort reminiscent of President Bush's smallpox plan, officials at two California zoos inoculated their endangered California condors with an experimental vaccine that may be the animals' only hope for survival. [View Article](#)

USEUCOM

Britain to Ban Kava Herbal Medicines

20 December - Reuters reported Britain is to ban medicines containing the herbal remedy kava next month after research found it could cause liver failure in rare cases, according to the government. The root extract, marketed as an herbal stress-buster and used for centuries as a mild narcotic in the South Pacific, is due to be banned from January 13, 2003. "Given the expert advice...it is clear that this ban is necessary," Professor Alasdair Breckenridge, chairman of the Committee on Safety of Medicines, a government drug advisory body, said in a statement. Government health chiefs said they had learned of 70 worldwide reports of adverse liver reactions, four of which ended in death. Countries including Australia, Canada, France and Germany have taken action against the herbal remedy, ranging from pulling kava products from the shelves to issuing warnings. The United States' Food and Drug Administration issued a warning to consumers in March. [View Article](#)

Central African Republic: Meningitis Outbreak in the South

24 December – IRIN News reported several cases of meningitis have been detected in the southern Central African Republic (CAR) city of Mobaye, on the border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, according to Medicos Sin Fronteras (MSF-Spain). "A local religious community told us last week that 10 cases of meningitis had been detected," Francis Coteur, the MSF-Spain acting coordinator, told IRIN on Monday. He added that an MSF team would fly to Mobaye by the end of this week to assess the situation to determine whether or not it was a contagious form of meningitis. "If the epidemic is confirmed, we will supply necessary anti-meningitis drugs and vaccines," Coteur said. Mobaye and other areas have been isolated from the capital, Bangui, ever since the failed October coup attempt by supporters of the renegade CAR former chief of staff, Gen Francois Bozize, who still controls areas in the north and south. Stocks of medicines and vaccines in those areas had already run out, exposing local populations to diseases and epidemics, said Coteur. [View Article](#)

Measures Against Avian Influenza in Italy

24 December – ProMed reported the European Commission has approved a vaccination program against avian influenza in the Veneto and Lombardy regions of Northern Italy, and imposed restrictions on the movements of live birds, hatching eggs, table eggs and fresh poultry meat in the said regions. In October 2002, the presence of a low pathogenic avian influenza virus was confirmed, within the framework of surveillance activities, in the Veneto and Lombardy regions. The Italian authorities have acted energetically, including the elimination of affected flocks, in order to stop the propagation of the virus and to prevent its possible mutation into a

highly pathogenic variant. The current vaccination is meant to protect the enterprises at risk. [View Article](#)

Rift Valley Fever, Sheep and Goat - Senegal

21 December – ProMed reported an outbreak of Rift Valley Fever in two districts in Senegal. The two locations are the Galoya Peul village in the Saint-Louis region of the Podor district, and the Dabia Olédji village, in the Matam region of the Matam district. Thirty-seven sheep have been diagnosed with the disease in Podor. Fifty-five sheep and 15 goats have been diagnosed with the disease in Matam. [View Article](#)

Trichinella Infection in Germany from Imported Meat

26 December – ProMed reported 3 cases of Trichinellosis have occurred in Frankfurt am Main in Germany. The source of infection was smoked wild boar meat brought into Germany by travelers from Romania. [View Article](#)

Uganda: Dysentery Breaks Out in Rubindi, Restaurants Closed

20 December – AllAfrica.com reported the Rubindi sub-county in Mbarara district has been hit by an outbreak of dysentery raising fears that cholera, currently affecting Kampala, could be on the threshold, writes Vision Reporter. The in-charge of Rubindi Health Centre, Charles Mugisha, said 17 people were treated for dysentery last week. Mugisha said eating places and bars with poor sanitary conditions had been closed. He urged the people to promptly report any suspected cases of dysentery or cholera. [View Article](#)

USCENTCOM

Aid Urgently Needed in Afghanistan

28 December – VOA News reported about 600,000 people in Afghanistan are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance according to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). It says the aid will be needed throughout the harsh winter months. UNICEF says most of those in need are internally displaced or returning refugees. UNICEF says it is easier for aid agencies to work in Afghanistan now that the Taliban regime is gone, but the situation remains very fragile. The children's agency says ongoing regional fighting, rising crime rates and prolonged droughts continue to put pressure on the survival and welfare of people throughout the country. Children and women are seen as particularly vulnerable. [View Article](#)

Ethiopia: Meningococcal Meningitis

27 December – AFMIC reported according to the press, 26 cases of meningitis (5 deaths) have been reported. A vaccination campaign is underway and additional medicine and personnel have been allotted to outbreak control. Meningitis outbreaks in Ethiopia typically involve hundreds to thousands of cases annually during the dry season, normally December through May. Although an underestimate of actual case totals, more than 1,300 cases were reported in late 2001/early 2002, and approximately 6,266 cases were reported in late 2000/early 2001.

Although not reported as laboratory confirmed, these cases likely are due to meningococcal meningitis. Ethiopia lies within the African meningitis belt, which stretches from Senegal to Ethiopia. Additional meningococcal meningitis cases will likely be reported in the near future from this and other countries in the meningitis belt. [View Article](#)

Measles and Typhoid Outbreaks in Tajikistan

11 December – MSF reported two outbreaks - one typhoid the other measles - have struck the Jirgital District in the Rasht Valley of Tajikistan simultaneously. The first cases of measles were reported in August and September in the neighboring districts of Garm and Tajikabad. After lobbying activities by MSF in October, the measles epidemic was acknowledged at the beginning of November. Between 20,000 and 23,000 children, aged between one year and 15 years old, are to be vaccinated in Jirgital alone. There are indications that the epidemic has spread throughout the rest of the valley and MSF is lobbying other aid organizations to expand the campaign over the entire Rasht Valley region, targeting 123,000 persons. In addition, there are 59 people with typhoid who have been hospitalized in the community of Salikinjer. A latrine-contaminated water source is the suspected source of the outbreak. Water and sanitation equipment, chlorination kits, medical supplies, food and blankets have been sent to the community while coordinated efforts with the local medical staff are underway to deal with the problem. [View Article](#)

USNORTHCOM

Alberta: New Cases of Hantavirus Infection Reported

24 December – ProMed reported Albertans are being cautioned to avoid mouse droppings or urine after 2 cases of Hantavirus infection were reported to provincial officials last week. Dr. Karen Grimsrud, Alberta's deputy provincial health officer "Albertans should be aware they need to take special care when working or playing in locations that may expose them to rodents, especially mice, that may carry the Hantavirus." "There are likely infected mice in all regions of Alberta." This year 4 cases of the disease have been confirmed in the province. [View Article](#)

CDC Taking Inventory of Nation's Polio Virus Stocks

27 December – CNN News reported the federal government is taking an inventory of polio strains in labs around the country as part of an effort to prevent the virus from accidentally escaping and causing outbreaks once the disease is eradicated. All 31,000 institutions that have poliovirus stocks, including health departments, hospitals and private companies, have until 31 December to submit a report to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The CDC is also asking labs that no longer need to work with the virus to destroy any stocks they have. Slightly more than half of the 31,000 institutions have already submitted reports. Many have asked for extensions. [View Article](#)

Inspections Reduce Diarrhea Cases on Cruise Ships

23 December - HealthScoutNews reported mandatory sanitation inspections greatly reduce outbreaks of diarrhea on vacation cruise ships, according to a study posted online at the

American Journal of Preventive Medicine Web site. The findings are scheduled to appear in the journal's April 2003 print issue. The study found that diarrhea cases and outbreaks on board cruise ships declined in the 1990s as cruise lines improved their sanitation practices. From 1990 to 2000, sanitation inspection scores gradually improved from an average of 89 to an average of 93. The best possible score is 100. Over that same period of time, outbreaks of normal diarrheal illness declined 44 per cent. In that same time, the number of outbreak cases (where more than 3 per cent of passengers get sick) declined 27 per cent. The study found that older cruise ships, smaller-sized ships, and ships that belonged to small cruise fleets were more likely to fail the sanitation inspections than newer ships and ships in larger fleets. [View Article](#)

OSHA News Release: 2001 Workplace Injury and Illness Rates

19 December – OSHA announced a continued decline in workplace injuries and illnesses. U.S. Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao said, "Workplace injuries and illnesses have dropped for the ninth consecutive year, reaching an all-time low. Construction injuries are down. And there has been a 10% reduction in repeated trauma injuries, such as carpal tunnel syndrome and other musculoskeletal disorders." There were 500,000 fewer job related injuries in 2001 than the year before, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. This year's rate of 5.7 injuries per 100 full-time employers reflects an eight percent drop in cases from the previous year. [View Article](#)

SIGA Selected by U.S. Government to Develop Smallpox Drug

23 December – Hoovers reported SIGA Technologies, Inc. announced that it has been awarded an initial U.S. government contract for \$1.6 million to develop an effective Smallpox antiviral drug. The contract is with the U.S. Army. The development work under the contract will be performed at SIGA's research facility in Corvallis, Oregon. At the present time there is no effective treatment for Smallpox and the only vaccine available has dangerous side effects. According to a study by the ACP (American College of physicians)-ASIM (American Society of Internal Medicine), over 50 million Americans would be vulnerable to the serious side effects of today's Smallpox vaccine. The goal of the U.S. Army Medical Research Material Command (USAMRMC) contract is to develop compounds capable of inhibiting the growth of orthopoxviruses such as Smallpox and preventing disease-related pathology in humans. [View Article](#)

Smallpox Vaccine Recipients Must Wait to Give Blood

31 December – Reuters reported government officials in the US are asking people who receive the smallpox vaccine not to donate blood for at least three weeks after getting the shot because it contains a live virus that can enter the blood supply and spread to other people. Vaccine recipients who suffer complications, such as skin lesions, should not be allowed to donate blood until 14 days after recovering from all the side effects. Anyone who develops lesions on the skin after coming into contact with someone who was vaccinated can donate blood after the lesions have healed. If they have scratched off the scabs instead of allowing them to heal on their own, then they must wait 3 months to donate blood from the day of contact with the recipient of the vaccine. If donated blood is given by a vaccine recipient or someone who came in contact with the vaccine before the wait time is over, then the blood must be destroyed or used for non-human research. Blood banks must alert the patient and his or her doctor if the blood has already been transfused. [View Article](#)

Study Urges More Screening for Chlamydia

23 December – ABC News reported giving sexually active teenage girls a simple urine test during a routine doctor's visit is an effective way of identifying chlamydia and ultimately helping prevent infertility problems later in life, a study found. Researchers from the University of California, San Francisco worked with physicians at 10 Kaiser Permanente managed care pediatric clinics in Northern California. They found that an average of 5.8 percent of sexually active girls ages 14 to 18 tested positive for chlamydia in routine screening patients who otherwise would not have been tested. That rate is on track with the national infection rate of 6 percent to 9 percent found during routine screening, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But the new and promising finding was that pediatricians were receptive to changing their behavior regarding the sensitive topic of sexual health, according to lead author Dr. Mary-Ann Shafer. Chlamydia is the most common bacterial sexually transmitted disease in America, with about 3 million new cases each year. If detected, it is easily treatable with antibiotics. Teenage girls are six times more likely to contract it than adult women, according to the study in the Dec. 11 issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association.

[View Article](#)

US Military Influenza Policy Letters, 2002-2003

December – GEISWeb reported the Department of Defense has published their Influenza policy letters for the 2002-2003 influenza season. These letters are available at

<http://www.geis.ha.osd.mil/GEIS/SurveillanceActivities/Influenza/fluPolicy02to03.asp>

US Military Medics Vaccinated for Smallpox

19 December - Reuters reported about 100 military doctors and nurses received smallpox injections on Wednesday 18 December, at Walter Reed Army Medical Center immunology clinic in Washington. This is the first wave of a US plan to immunize millions of troops and emergency workers against the long-dormant disease, now deemed a possible terrorist threat.

[View Article](#)

U.S. Regulators Make New Charges on Red Cross Blood

21 December – Reuters reported U.S. regulators charged in their latest inspection, the American Red Cross continues to fall short of requirements meant to keep the blood supply safe. Food and Drug Administration inspectors said they observed more than 200 alleged lapses of blood safety practices by the Red Cross, which collects about half of the U.S. blood supply. The agency, which said it was investigating if any tainted blood had been released and given to patients, has repeatedly cited the charity for several years for violating federal blood safety requirements. In a preliminary report, FDA inspectors said the Red Cross, among other things, took blood from people who should have been ineligible to donate, and failed to ensure it kept accurate records of people banned from giving blood. The organization also did not adequately investigate employee allegations of improper record keeping, and did not have effective procedures in place to make sure recalled or withdrawn blood was not reissued, the FDA said. [View Article](#)

Wooden Toys Recalled Due to Choking Hazard

28 December – Yahoo News reported the US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) announced that Kmart Corp. of Troy, Michigan voluntarily recalled about 50,000 candy-filled wooden toy wagons, trucks and trains. "The wheels on the wooden toys may break off into small parts, which may pose a choking hazard to young children," according to a CPSC statement. Although no such incidents have been reported to Kmart, the recall is being conducted as a precautionary measure. The red wagons, trucks and trains subject to recall can be identified by the following UPC codes, located on the underside of the toys: 694405900012 for the wagons, 694405900029 for the trucks, and 694405900036 for the trains. In the rear of each vehicle is a clear plastic box filled with candy. "Consumers should take them away from children immediately and return them to any Kmart store for a full refund," CPSC safety experts advise. For more information, contact Kmart via their 24-hour toll free number, 1-800-63KMART (56278), or visit them online at <http://www.kmart.com/>. Detailed pictures of the recalled items can be viewed at the Consumer Product Safety Commission's Web site, <http://www.cpsc.gov/> [View Article](#)

World Trade Center Dust Analysis Offers Good News for New Yorkers

23 December – EurekAlert reported a new study of dust samples taken from around Manhattan in the days following Sept. 11, 2001, could offer some much-needed good news. A team of researchers tested debris from the collapsed towers for toxic organic chemicals and found that the potential risk of exposure from inhaling such compounds was lower than expected. The findings are scheduled to appear in the Feb. 1 print edition of Environmental Science & Technology, a peer-reviewed journal of the American Chemical Society, the world's largest scientific society. The article was initially published Dec. 18 on the journal's Web site. The scientists were looking specifically for persistent organic pollutants — highly stable compounds that pose a special problem because they endure in the environment and can be toxic to humans and wildlife. They found no evidence of high levels of two particular POPs: pesticides and polychlorinated biphenyls, which were used in hundreds of industrial and commercial applications until their production was banned in 1977. [View Article](#)

USPACOM

Australia: Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning

27 December – ProMED reported Victorian health authorities have issued a warning for paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) in the waters of inner city Melbourne. Toxic algal bloom has occurred in Hobson's Bay, including the northernmost reaches of Port Phillip Bay between Williamstown and Elwood. Toxic algal blooms periodically occur in this region; shellfish accumulate toxins under these conditions. Human consumption of toxic shellfish can lead to various degrees of illness, including paralytic shellfish poisoning, the most severe form. In the absence of appropriate monitoring measures, all shellfish in this region should be considered toxic. [View Article](#)

China (Hong Kong): Avian Influenza

28 December – ProMED reported Hong Kong authorities have destroyed 16,000 chickens and stopped imports of the bird from China until New Year's Eve in an effort to prevent a repeat of a

fatal "bird flu" which killed 6 people in the city in 1997. This was carried out at a poultry farm in northern, rural New Territories, after more than 1000 chickens were found dead there earlier on 28 December. A dozen birds tested at the farm in the Ta Kwu Ling area were found to have been infected with avian flu virus, the government said in a statement. A government spokesman also said chicken imports from mainland China would be halted until 31 Dec 2002 so that it could close a poultry wholesale market for cleansing and disinfection. The infected farm had earlier made deliveries to the market. "To minimize the risk on the possible spreading of the virus, we need to thoroughly cleanse the wholesale market to eliminate (any) virus that might exist there," the spokesman said. [View Article](#)

Echinococcus multilocularis, Canine - Japan

30 December – ProMed reported *Echinococcus multilocularis*, a tiny parasitic tapeworm usually found in small animals that causes serious liver disorders when it infects humans, was detected in 20 pet dogs in Hokkaido, including one that lived indoors, a research group said. This is the first time a dog living indoors, and therefore in extensive contact with its owners, was found to be infected with the parasite. Alarmed by the danger of the rapid spread of the disease, which is passed on by animals, the Health, Labour and Welfare Ministry instructed prefectural governments to adopt thorough measures to prevent infection. *Echinococcus* is classified in the most dangerous of 4 categories of infectious diseases under the Infectious Disease Prevention Law. [View Article](#)

Korean Government to Vaccinate Pigs Within 10km Radius of Cholera Outbreak

25 December – Hoovers reported the Korean government has decided to vaccinate pigs reared within a 10-kilometer radius of the current outbreak of cholera, including areas of Incheon and Kimpo, health authorities said yesterday. According to the National Institute of Research and Quarantine Service, it is the only measure that can quickly prevent the spreading of the disease among hogs. "These are regions where many pigs are slaughtered for human consumption, and it is essential for extraordinary steps to be taken," said NIRQS president Kim Ok-kyong. Under the rules of the Office Internationale des Epizooties (World Organization for Animal Health), infected livestock must be slaughtered, but vaccination can be administered as a means of prevention. At present, there are some 700,000 pigs within the 10-kilometer boundary that have to be vaccinated, and health authorities are continuing to monitor the situation to determine whether others will have to undergo similar treatment. [View Article](#)

Mystery Fever Creates Havoc in the Chhara Village of India

23 December – ProMed reported as many as 173 cases of some mysterious fever have been detected in the Chhara village of Kodinar Taluka in the Junagadh district of India. In the last month alone, 8 children and around 25 to 30 adults died due to the fever. A special control room has now been set up in the village to help the affected people. Health officials in Junagadh told TNN that 3 teams of doctors and senior officials of the health department have rushed to the village to start immediate treatment of the affected people. These doctors have taken blood samples and sent them for analysis, officials said. Water samples have also been taken. [View Article1](#) [View Article 2](#)

Philippines: Agusan Tribesmen Die in Suspected Measles Outbreak

29 December - The Philippine Star reported since 23 Dec 2002, 12 persons have already died from what the health department in Caraga Region described as suspected "measles outbreak" in 5 tribal barangays here, Mamanwa tribal leaders said yesterday. National Commission of Indigenous People (NCIP) spokesperson Elvira Catuburan of Caraga Region identified 7 of the 11 dead victims from the outbreak as occurring in members of the Mamanwa tribe aged: 45 years, 21 years, 5 children between 8 months and 2 years of age. Hardest hit by the "suspected measles outbreak" were remote and hinterland tribal barangays of Matingue, Sinawsawan, Kasagayan, Pangaylan, and Mambajo, some 30 to 36 kilometers walking distance from Barangay Poblacion. The difficulty of bringing medicine and health personnel to the said tribal barangays because of bad road condition and lack of mode of transportation has raised fear of the further spread of the suspected outbreak. [View Article](#)

Polio in Goats Baffles Experts

30 December – The Times of India reported two startling findings by scientists of the National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD) in India have given a jolt to the national polio eradication program. While investigating a disease outbreak in Gombli village in Tamil Nadu, NICD scientists have detected polio 'antibodies' in goats implying that goats can get involved in the cycle of transmission overthrowing the current notion that humans are the only host of polio virus. More ominous is the second finding in which they isolated polio (vaccine) virus from adults of the same village who had developed paralysis and died. According to NICD, subsequent analysis by Enteroviruses Research Center in Mumbai showed it to be a mutated form of the strain currently used in vaccination program suggesting that the vaccine strain has reverted to wild type. While cases of "vaccine derived polio virus" (VDPV) have been reported globally, the isolation of VDPV from adults has raised the question whether immunization should be extended to adults and live oral vaccine should be replaced by killed vaccine. [View Article](#)

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Nothing significant to report.

Please contact the below-listed POC for suggested improvements and/or comments regarding this report. This report is also available on the USACHPPM website at <http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/Hiupdate/>.

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ACRONYMS

AFMIC - Armed Forces Medical Intelligence Center
BBC – British Broadcasting Company
BMJ – British Medical Journal
BSE – Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy
CIDRAP – Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy
CDC – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CNN – Cable News Network
CSR – Communicable Disease Surveillance and Response – A branch of the WHO
DoD/GEIS – Department of Defense/Global Emerging Infections System
EPA – Environmental Protection Agency
FDA – Food and Drug Administration
IRIN - Integrated Regional Information Networks, part of the [UN](#) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).
MMWR – Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report
MSNBC – Microsoft National Broadcasting Company
NASA – National Aeronautic and Space Association
NIH – National Institute of Health
NIOSH- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
VOA-Voice of America
WHO – World Health Organization