

USACHPPM
HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE

14 February 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

Anger Expression Can Be Healthy for Some Men

05 February – Reuters reported outward expressions of anger may help protect some men from heart disease and stroke, a new study shows. The risk of a non-fatal heart attack was cut by more than 50% in men with moderate levels of anger expression, compared to men who rarely expressed anger, according to the study published in Psychosomatic Medicine. Men with moderate levels of anger expression were also less likely to have a stroke than those who rarely expressed anger. The study may appear to contradict previous research showing that chronic anger raises the risk of heart disease. [View Article](#)

Bio-Terrorism Field Test for 1st Responders

11February –Yahoo News reported a biotechnology company announced the launch of a new product to help first responders screen suspicious powders for bioterrorism agents. The BioCheck(TM) Powder Screening Kit works by quickly identifying the presence or absence of protein, a biomolecule found in all living materials. It therefore provides a rapid screen for the possible presence of multiple bioterrorism agents such as anthrax and ricin toxin, while ruling out most of the ordinary substances that citizens have frequently feared to be possible weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). The product requires no instruments and helps first responders determine in five minutes or less whether testing for one or more specific pathogens or toxins is warranted. Kits are now being sold to fire departments and public safety personnel worldwide for under \$25. Demand for this product is expected to increase in light of announcements last week by senior U.S. law enforcement and health officials about the possible use of ricin toxin, a highly poisonous plant protein, as a terrorist weapon. [View Article](#)

Cycling Appears to Have A 'Protective Effect'

10 February – BBC News reported bicycling could cut women's risk of breast cancer by a third, researchers have suggested. Just three hours of moderately intensive cycling a week carries a protective effect of 34%, they say. German researchers found the benefits of cycling appeared to increase the more women did. Previous research has suggested exercise can reduce cancer risk. This study suggests cycling could have particular benefits. [View Article](#)

Eye Condition May Help Diagnose West Nile

10 February - ABC News reported the condition of a patient's eyes may be one way to diagnose West Nile virus, doctors at Northwestern University say. In the February issue of the Journal of Ophthalmology, the doctors described a patient who complained of seeing dots known as "floaters" in one eye along with fatigue, a headache and a low fever. The 62-year-old Chicago woman had been suffering from the symptoms for two weeks. The doctors found tiny lesions in her eyes and other abnormalities, and prescribed the standard treatment. When the patient's vision worsened and fever increased, doctors ran a series of blood tests and found the West Nile virus. Her eyesight returned to normal when she was cured of the virus. The case suggests it may be possible to diagnose West Nile virus by examining the eyes of patients. [View Article](#)

Food Poison Bug 'Protects Against Bowel Cancer'

10 February – The Scotsman reported bacteria responsible for “travelers’ tummy” might protect people against bowel cancer, scientists revealed today. A toxin released by the E.coli bug is largely to blame for cases of “Montezuma’s revenge” or “Delhi belly”. But the developing countries where travelers’ diarrhea is most common also have the lowest incidence of bowel cancer. A team of US scientists today showed evidence of a connection. They added E.coli toxin to dividing bowel cancer cells in the laboratory and found that their rapid proliferation slowed to a crawl. The discovery implies that E.coli helps to make people resistant to bowel cancer in places where food poisoning is common. [View Article](#)

How Parents Can Help Kids Understand, Cope With Issue of War

10 February – ABC News reported as the White House makes its case for war against Iraq, experts say parents will have to present one at home, and to a smaller and much younger audience — their children. As the prospect of war against Iraq fills adult conversations and news programs, children may express fear, confusion, and anxiety about the issues. But experts say parents can and should help dispel those apprehensions, answering their children's questions honestly and accurately, and assuring them they will be safe. "It is important to communicate to all children, in appropriate language, that war is serious and also that war is intended to be protective, to prevent bad things from happening in the future," suggested Dr. Robert Pynoos, co-director of the National Center for Child Traumatic Stress at UCLA. Parents should validate their children's feelings, and let them know that they understand what they are feeling, experts said. [View Article](#)

Investigation of Single-Use Versus Reusable Infectious Waste Containers as Potential Sources of Microbial Contamination

February – The American Journal of Infection Control published a study where cultures taken from reusable infectious waste boxes showed that >99% were contaminated with bacteria or fungi; most were normal environmental or skin flora, but some cultures showed microorganisms that can be potentially harmful to patients with compromised immunity. Bacteria and fungi were identified. In contrast, only 10% of the incoming single-use boxes showed any contamination. Infection rates dropped from 5.8 to 3.2 per 100 burn patients ($P < .05$) after the institution of cleaning and other changes made to decrease the possibility of microbial transfer from the infectious waste boxes to the patients. Facilities need be aware of the possible contamination of reusable infectious waste containers with microorganisms capable of causing nosocomial infections in patients. [View Article](#)

New HIV barrier 'Closer'

10 February – BBC News reported scientists believe they could be a step closer to developing a new way of stopping the transmission of HIV without using condoms. Researchers from the US and Britain found for the first time that a microbicide can block the spread of the virus which can lead to AIDS. Correspondents say the research - published in the Journal Nature Medicine - could eventually benefit women whose partners refuse to use condoms. Recent figures show that women are being hit hardest by the HIV epidemic, with the number of women infected with the virus increasing steadily worldwide. The microbicides, possibly in the form of gels, foam sponges or pessaries, could be used by women before sexual intercourse. They work to stop the virus from getting near the vulnerable cells it infects and increasing the body's defenses. In this case, the scientists applied a microbicide gel, which contained a human antibody in the vaginas of macaque monkeys. They found that the gel protected the macaques from infection with the simian HIV virus for more than seven hours. [View Article](#)

Poor Memory with Age Linked to High Blood Sugar

05 February – Science Health News reported losing memory as you age may not be inevitable, according to U.S. research which suggests that maintaining low blood sugar levels through diet and exercise may keep memories intact longer. The study, by the New York University School of Medicine, found that subjects who scored lowest on memory recall tests also had poor glucose tolerance, and tended to have a significantly smaller hippocampus - the part of the brain responsible for learning and memory. This is the first time the association has been seen. [View Article](#)

Rat Disease Set to Increase

10 February – BBC News reported disease spread by rats is likely to become an increasing problem as the developing world becomes ever more urbanized, experts have warned. Every day nearly four million rats are born worldwide - ten for every human. They are known to carry nearly 70 diseases, but it is suspected actually harbor a lot more. Dr Lyn Hinds, of Australia's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, told the conference: "Rats are a reservoir of disease, the sleeping giants of disease in the world. "It is more likely than ever that we will have greater levels of debilitating diseases caused by rats with the increased density of human populations." Among the diseases that rats are known to carry are cholera,

typhus, bubonic plague and leptospirosis, a bacterial illness spread by their urine contaminating water or food. Dr Hinds said 6,000 cases of leptospirosis were diagnosed in Thailand alone in 2000, killing 350 people. However, researchers say many more deaths should have been attributed to rats but were classified as unknown fever. [View Article](#)

Soy-Tea Combo May Thwart Prostate Cancer

06 February – Health Scout News reported the same two foods that many scientists believe reduce the risk of breast cancer in women may also protect men from prostate cancer. That's the conclusion of a new Harvard University study that looked at the power of tea and soy to inhibit the growth of prostate tumors in mice. Unlike other studies that examined the food's individual effects on tumor growth, the new research focused on the power that came from the combined effect of tea and soy together. "I think the most important finding is that consumption of both soy and tea has a synergistic effect," says study author Jin-Rong Zhou, adding that each appears to reinforce the power of the other to fight cancer. The study appears in the February issue of The Journal of Nutrition. [View Article](#)

Tracking The West Nile Virus

05 February - CBS News reported according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 4,000 Americans, including about 3,900 last year, have contracted West Nile since it first surfaced in 1999. At least 252 people have died of the virus, most of them elderly. From autumn's early frost to the first sprout of spring, a flock of volunteer bird watchers across the United States and Canada are helping track the virus by recording the number and species of birds that frequent their feeders. West Nile is now carried by at least 100 species of birds, including the bald eagle and the endangered Mississippi sandhill crane. Crows and blue jays are the hardest hit but scientists believe smaller, uncounted birds also have succumbed to the virus. The watchers record details on weather and length of time the birds stay, entering the information into a computer or on a tally sheet. Cornell ornithologists will then analyze the data to determine changes in population and distribution of more than 100 bird species. [View Article](#)

USEUCOM

As Vaccination Rates Decline in Ireland, Cases of Measles Soar

10 February – The New York Times reported public health officials in Ireland blame latent fears that the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine cause autism, for a measles outbreak. The vaccination rate has fallen to 63 percent in parts of Dublin and 72 percent nationally; the internationally accepted level for controlling the disease is 95 percent. Over six weeks in December and January, the National Disease Surveillance Center (NDSC) recorded 100 cases of measles. It typically sees about 30. Now, two weeks later, 100 more cases have been recorded. But some Irish doctors say low immunization levels here are a chronic problem, citing overworked health workers and an outdated system that makes it hard to track children who need vaccinations. Another part of the problem is that Ireland's regional public health bodies are large, unwieldy organizations that are also responsible for a range of social services that deflect resources from purely medical issues like immunizations. Vaccination records are largely kept on paper, and regions with computerized systems are incompatible with one another, making it

difficult to follow unvaccinated children when their families move. The NDSC director, Dr. Darina O'Flanagan, issued a national advisory and sought a meeting with the government health minister to revise immunization strategies. [View Article](#)

DRC: Influenza Outbreak Affects Over a Million

08 February – ProMed reported a deadly flu epidemic has struck more than a million people and killed more than 100 in Kinshasa, according to the Democratic Republic of Congo's (DRC) Health Ministry. The flu, which was first reported in the Central African Republic in September 2002, has now been registered in 4 Congolese provinces, where authorities say it has killed at least 2000 people. It has been confirmed this week that it is the same strain of influenza virus that was first reported in September 2002 in the northern Bosobolo health zone, and before then on the other side of the Oubangiu river in the Central African Republic. Refugees, rebel soldiers, and traders are believed to have brought the virus into DRC. The vast majority of sufferers are infants and old people living in isolated and impoverished jungle communities in the northern Equateur Province, under the control of the rebel Movement for the Liberation of Congo. The war has meant clinics and hospitals there are in a woeful condition, lacking both doctors and medicines. The Health Ministry says the epidemic has now reached not only Kinshasa but also the neighboring provinces of Bandundu and Bas Congo. Medecins sans Frontieres, says flu has also been reported this week in neighboring Congo-Brazzaville. [View Report](#)

Ebola Outbreak in Congo

05 February – ProMed reported in the north of Congo-Brazzaville, 16 people have died in an outbreak of Ebola virus infection. The Congolese authorities say they are extremely concerned that the virus might spread. There is no cure for Ebola and little is known about the virus, which causes its victims to die from internal hemorrhaging. The Congolese Ministry of Health says 16 people are known to have died so far, but communications with the villages of Kele and Mbou, 800 kilometers north of Brazzaville in the Region of Cuvette West, are difficult. Dr Joseph Mboussa, director in the Ministry of Health, says a villager has been dying every few days since the outbreak began on 4 January, and already the death toll could be much higher than 16. It is believed that villagers eating primates that were already infected with Ebola caused the current outbreak. Ebola experts expect to leave soon to investigate the outbreak. Medical professionals are at great risk of contracting Ebola. The Ebola virus is easily spread just by skin contact with an infected primate or person. Dr Mboussa says this makes the virus particularly difficult to contain, as Congolese funeral rites dictate that the family of a deceased person be washed before burial. The Congolese health ministry has so far asked local inhabitants not to travel, but the authorities are hopeful they will not have to quarantine the village. [View Report 1](#) [View Report 2](#) Primatologists have also reported a massive die-off of great apes in the Republic of Congo. The epidemic seems to be quickly spreading from west to east. [View Report 3](#)

Guinea: Yellow Fever Kills 24

04 February – IRIN News reported an outbreak of yellow fever in Guinea had killed 24 people by 23 January out of 43 cases in southern Guinea's Macenta and Kerouane prefectures. The Ministry of Public Health of Guinea reported the cases and laboratory confirmation was completed by the Institut Pasteur in Dakar, Senegal and Lyon, France. "A mass vaccination campaign has begun in Macenta and nearby prefectures, targeting 600,000 people," WHO said. Macenta is near the Liberian border, while Kerouane is nearer to the border with Cote d'Ivoire.

Thousands of Liberian refugees have lived in Macenta. An effective vaccine for yellow fever has been available for 60 years, but the number of people infected over the last 20 years has increased and the viral disease fever is now once again a serious public health issue, according to WHO. [View Article](#)

Imported Case of Lassa Fever in United Kingdom

10 February – WHO reported the diagnosis of Lassa fever in a British soldier recently returned from duty in rural Sierra Leone, has been confirmed by virological tests performed at the Enteric, Respiratory and Neurological Virus Laboratory at the Central Public Health Laboratory, London, United Kingdom. He had been based in an area endemic for Lassa fever. He is currently being treated at the high security infectious diseases unit at Coppetts Wood Hospital, London. This is the sixth case of Lassa fever to have been imported to the United Kingdom since 1976. [View Article](#)

Measles Killing Children Who Fled Drought

10 February - AllAfrica.com reported a measles epidemic is killing children in a camp where families sought sanctuary from the drought, an international aid organization said on Monday. UK-based Christian Aid said that the crisis in the makeshift camp in Haraghe, in the eastern Oromiya region, is getting worse as more people arrive in search of food and promises of resettlement on fertile land. "The situation in the camp is dire and people - especially children - are dying every day," said the organisation in an appeal for help. According to the aid agency, some 37,000 people fled to the camp - a former military base of the previous Derg regime. [View Article](#)

Reduced Guinea-Worm Infection Cases in Enugu

08 February - AllAfrica.com reported cases of guinea-worm infection have reduced drastically in endemic areas of Enugu State, the Coordinator of the Guinea-Worm Eradication Program in Nigeria, Gen. Yakubu Gowon, has said. According to him, the cases have reduced from 1,000 in 2001 to 39 in 2002 in Aninri and Isi-Uzo local government areas of the state. The coordinator, who had on his team officials from the WHO, UNDP and UNICEF, said the team had discussions with the people during the tour of the areas. He said the people confirmed that the cases of the disease had reduced drastically in their areas. Gowon attributed the success recorded so far to the provision of clean water to the people and the willingness to abandon unhygienic water sources. [View Article](#)

Suspected Case of Variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease in Spain

08 February – ProMed reported a 30-year-old man from Madrid was diagnosed with possible variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD). If the diagnosis is confirmed, the patient will become the first Spanish victim of the disease. The patient could have acquired the disease while living in the United Kingdom between 1994 and 1996. The family is attempting to have the patient undergo a new experimental therapy based on the intracerebral injection of pentosan polysulphate, applied for the first time to a terminally ill male patient in Northern Ireland (Belfast), but they do not know whom to contact. [View Report](#)

United Kingdom: Increasing Influenza B Virus Activity

08 February – ProMed reported the Communicable Disease Surveillance Center (CDSC) has received the first reports for the 2002-3 season, of outbreaks of influenza-like illness, all of which have occurred in schools. Positive detections of influenza B virus have been reported from three cases, in the south of England, during weeks 4 and 5 (week ending Sun 2 Feb 2003). Attack rates have ranged from 15 per cent to 58 per cent. Additional reports of outbreaks have since been received from the north of England where influenza activity has been detected in several schools through the monitoring of school sickness absence rates. Reports of the flu have shown an increase in the 5 to 14 year age group for week 4, suggesting rising influenza B virus activity in children. [View Report](#)

USCENTCOM

Nothing Significant to Report

USNORTHCOM

Any Troops Killed In Chemical, Bio Attacks May Be Cremated

10 February – The Los Angeles Times reported the Pentagon is considering cremating the remains of any U.S. troops killed by biological or chemical attacks in Iraq rather than bringing them home for burial. The measure would be designed to prevent the spread of chemical or biological agents from contaminated bodies to people on the home front, the officials said. The Pentagon has for decades gone to great lengths in an attempt to recover for burial the body of every U.S. soldier, sailor and airman killed abroad. The current review, which began last month, is being conducted by officials of the Army's Mortuary Affairs program, which is charged with the recovery of all service member remains, and by health and safety officials from all four branches of the military, Colin said. [View Article](#)

Arizona: Newcastle Disease in Game Fowl

06 February – ProMed reported Exotic Newcastle Disease (END) has been confirmed in a backyard flock in La Paz County, AZ. Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is currently developing a federal quarantine for the affected area in Arizona. APHIS and the state of Arizona have begun surveillance efforts of the backyard bird population and have established a Task Force in Arizona. [View Report](#)

Clues In Nevada Leukemia Cluster?

07 February – CBS News reported two upcoming federal studies will compare contaminant levels in Fallon with two other Nevada towns - Lovelock and Pahrump - and compare DNA from sickened families to that of other Fallon residents. A federal study of a childhood leukemia cluster in this northern Nevada town found high levels of tungsten and arsenic in most residents - but nothing to indicate that either caused any cancers. Based on the results, however, the

national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has asked the National Institutes of Health to research possible links between tungsten and cancer, scientists said Thursday. "We've learned a lot. But we haven't found the cause of this leukemia cluster," said Dr. Carol Rubin, head of the CDC's research team. Rubin released the study results Thursday at a community meeting attended by about 300 people. Preliminary results, which echoed those announced Thursday, had been released in August. Since 1997, the leukemia in Fallon - a farming community of 8,300 and home of the "Top Gun" Navy fighter pilot training base - has sickened 13 children and killed three others. [View Article](#)

Drug Tested in Gulf War Is Approved for Troops

06 February – The New York Times reported the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) gave final approval to a drug used to help protect troops against one type of nerve gas that might be used in any war with Iraq. The drug, pyridostigmine bromide, was used on an experimental basis in the Persian Gulf war in 1991, and some groups argued that it could have been a cause of gulf war syndrome. The syndrome is vaguely defined, but veterans complained of fatigue, rashes, headaches, muscle pains and memory loss. But an FDA spokesman said several postwar studies "all assert that you can't attribute any aspects of gulf war syndrome to this drug." Much higher doses of the drug are used to treat myasthenia gravis, a neuromuscular disease, the spokesman, Dr. Robert Temple, said, adding that the drug does not pass the blood-brain barrier, which protects the brain. It was approved for myasthenia gravis in 1955. At the front, pyridostigmine bromide is taken in tablets three times a day by troops in danger of being exposed to soman nerve gas. Soman is one of several nerve gases that kill by paralyzing the breathing muscles. The drug does not protect against sarin, a better-known, slower-acting gas in the same family. [View Article](#)

FDA Recommends Temporary Additional Blood Inspection Measures

07 February - The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced that it has issued recommendations to the blood industry for additional blood inspection measures and will issue interim guidance recommending enhanced visual inspection of all blood and blood components. This interim guidance is a precautionary measure as the FDA continues to actively investigate reports of units of blood and blood components containing white particulate matter. Most of the reports of particulates have, to date, been associated with blood and blood components contained in bags with a sampling port manufactured by Baxter Healthcare Corporation, and have come from Red Cross blood centers in the southeastern United States, including parts of Tennessee and Georgia. The exact nature of the particulate matter is under investigation. Preliminary results reported to FDA suggest that some particles represent clumping of platelets, which are a normal blood cell. Testing completed to date by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has found no evidence of infectious agents. [View Article](#)

Influenza B Virus Outbreak Closes Schools

08 February – ProMed reported a flu outbreak has forced schools in Kentucky and neighboring states to shut down in recent weeks. Thousands of children have fallen ill. Health officials attribute the outbreak in part to a new of influenza virus spreading around the country. At least 2 districts in Kentucky and 4 in Tennessee have closed, and schools in Georgia, Indiana, Missouri, Iowa, and Mississippi also have reported a rash of sick students. An elementary school in Bloomington, Indiana, reported last week that 40 per cent of its 217 students were

absent. Last week in Georgia, nearly a third of the pupils in Glynn County's 18 schools were out with flu-like illnesses. The strain of influenza B virus had until recently had been reported only in South East Asia. Children 12 or younger are being hit hard by this strain because they have probably not been exposed to a virus similar to the influenza B virus that's circulating this year.

[View Report](#)

Many Doses of Smallpox Vaccine Shipped, But Few Shots Given

05 February – CIDRAP News reported close to 200,000 doses of smallpox vaccine have been shipped to 35 states and two major cities since the vaccination program began Jan 24, but only about 700 healthcare workers have been vaccinated so far. CDC spokeswoman Katie Hoskins said today that about 700 healthcare workers in 12 or 13 jurisdictions have been inoculated in the campaign to prepare the nation to respond to a potential terrorist release of smallpox virus. On the basis of state smallpox response plans, about 450,000 public health and hospital workers are expected to receive voluntary shots in the first phase of the vaccination program. They will serve on teams that would respond to any smallpox outbreak. In a second phase of the program in coming months, federal health officials expect that up to 10 million healthcare and emergency response workers will be vaccinated. However, concerns about the safety of the vaccine and compensation for possible adverse reactions to it have limited the number of volunteers for the first round of shots. Nurses' organizations and healthcare workers' unions have called for delaying the program until various issues are resolved. [View Article](#)

Multiple Influenza Strains circulate through Texas

11 February – ProMed reported Texas is in the midst of one of the oddest influenza seasons in memory, with 5 distinct strains circulating in the state. And it's showing no sign of abating, health officials said. The worst offender has been a strain known as B-Hong Kong, which has swept through schools across the state, causing high absentee rates and forcing some schools and districts to close their doors temporarily. Although B-Hong Kong has been the primary strain, Texas also has seen a second B strain and 3 A strains in smaller numbers. A-type flu strains tend to be more genetically stable, permitting people to develop some immunity from year to year. B strains are more sporadic and vary more, causing more problems among the young. Although February is a bit late to get a flu shot, The Texas Department of health urged people who haven't yet had one to consider getting it. [View Report](#)

Scientists Study Migrant Worker AIDS

06 February – ABC News reported government researchers from California and Mexico plan to jointly study the spread of AIDS among migrant workers and their families in hopes of preventing it from reaching epidemic proportions in Mexico. The study will be the most comprehensive effort to track HIV infection rates in the migrant work population, said Dr. George Lemp, director of the University of California's AIDS Research Program. For three years, scientists will conduct field interviews, collect blood and urine samples and develop statistical models before making specific policy and program recommendations. Mexico's HIV-infection rate of 0.3 percent is five to six times lower than the United States, said Dr. Carlos Magis Rodriguez, research director for Mexico's National Center for the Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS. While the rate has held steady in Mexico since the late 1980s, he said the threat of Mexicans contracting the virus when they head north for jobs cannot be ignored. [View Article](#)

Scientists Find Gene Linked to Leprosy

10 February – The Montreal Gazette reported a team of McGill University scientists has discovered the gene that makes people vulnerable to a scourge of developing nations: leprosy. The breakthrough raises hopes that public-health authorities might eventually develop a vaccine that would eradicate leprosy around the world. "We could identify the people who are most likely to be at risk, and in preventive fashion, treat everybody," said geneticist Erwin Schurr. Leprosy can be cured with multi-drug therapy, especially if treatment is started early. Still, as many as 700,000 new cases of leprosy are reported each year, mostly in India, Africa and Brazil. The chronic disease of the skin, nervous system and mucous membranes is caused by the bacteria *Mycobacterium leprae*. The McGill team's research might provide the answer to a question that has puzzled scientists for more than 25 years: With the advent of multi-drug therapy, the number of annual cases of leprosy plunged from 3 million to about 700,000. For reasons that are unclear, the number of new cases continues to hover at about 500,000 to 700,000 each year, despite widespread treatment. Schurr and his colleagues suspect that the gene they identified puts people at risk of catching the bacteria, but not necessarily developing leprosy. These people can transmit the disease to others who are susceptible to developing the full-blown disease. There are probably huge "reservoirs" of people carrying *Mycobacterium leprae* in high-incidence areas. A vaccine targeted at people in those areas could spell the demise of leprosy, Schurr added. [View Article](#)

Shrimp Is Secret Ingredient in New US Army Bandage

05 February – Reuters reported shrimp shells and vinegar may become staples for U.S. Army troops in Iraq -- not as rations but in a new bandage that staunches heavy bleeding in minutes. A team of Portland, Oregon-based scientists searching for a solution to an age-old problem -- how to keep soldiers from bleeding to death on the battlefield -- stumbled on the kitchen pantry combination and, through high-tech wizardry, turned it into a super-sticky, combat-ready field dressing. HemCon Inc., the company Gregory formed with retired Col. Bill Wiesmann, a former director of the Army's Combat Casualty Care unit, has taken orders for 10,000 of the bandages, which won expedited FDA approval last month. The first shipments will go to U.S. soldiers in the Gulf in case of a war there. [View Article](#)

Study: Girls' Addiction Risks Different from Boys

05 February – Reuters reported girls and young women who use alcohol and drugs are more likely than boys and young men to attempt suicide, according to a study on Wednesday. Girls also can get hooked faster than boys, even when using the same or smaller amount of a particular substance, according to the study released at a briefing by Columbia University's National Center for Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA). CASA head Joseph Califano said the study underscored the need for different approaches to prevention and treatment for girls and young women. The study, which covered the years from early adolescence to age 22, found, for instance, that girls are at particularly high risk if they are depressed, stressed, or victims of physical or sexual abuse. [View Article](#)

USA: Norovirus Outbreaks in 4 Michigan Nursing Homes

06 February – ProMed reported at least 4 area nursing homes have experienced recent outbreaks of norovirus infection. Within a day, the viral infection made half of the residents at

the nursing homes ill and caused staff to miss work. Southeast Michigan has seen 20 outbreaks of noroviruses, or Norwalk-like viruses, a group of viruses that cause acute gastroenteritis. Officials at the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced that noroviruses appear to be on the rise. Health care providers are taking the time to do testing instead of writing it off as a general gastrointestinal infection. The current strain of norovirus in Genesee County is called the Farmington Hills strain because it was identified there in April 2002. [View Report](#)

U.S. Seizes More Honey Tainted with Antibiotic

05 February – Reuters reported nearly 185,000 pounds of honey imports were seized in Texas because of contamination with a human antibiotic banned from U.S. food products, the Food and Drug Administration said. The containers of honey seized from Hoyts Honey Farm Inc. in Baytown, Texas contained traces of chloramphenicol, an antibiotic drug used by physicians as a last resort to treat life-threatening infections. The drug is not widely used because it can cause aplastic anemia, in which the body's bone marrow stops making enough healthy blood cells. Chloramphenicol is prohibited in all U.S. food and animal feed products by the FDA. [View Article](#)

USPACOM

5 Die in Virus Outbreak in S. China

11 February – ABC News reported an unidentified virus that causes pneumonia has killed five people and left about 300 hospitalized in southern China. Rumors of a surging death toll prompted frightened residents to stock up on antibiotics, officials said Tuesday. Health officials said the outbreak in Guangdong province near Hong Kong was under control. They said Health Ministry investigators were trying to find the source of the disease. Three hundred people have been hospitalized one-third of them doctors, nurses and other health workers, said an official of the provincial Disease Prevention and Control Center. He said 59 of those had been treated and released. [View Article](#)

India Attacks Child Polio

09 February – BBC News reported India is embarking on one of the most ambitious health programs ever - immunizing children against polio, a totally preventable disease. Poverty, poor sanitation and a dense population make this a fertile ground for infection. In six days it hopes to immunize about 160 million people. India is one of the last outposts where polio has a hold. Polio, which used to paralyze 350,000 people a year - a third of them in India - is on the verge of becoming extinct. International agencies had hoped to complete the task by 2005, but with Uttar Pradesh in India registering a five-fold increase in cases over the past two years, hopes of reaching that milestone look slim. [View Article](#)

India: Vulture Deaths Bring Rise in Rabies

07 February – ProMed reported the catastrophic decline of the vulture population in India, vital to cleaning the streets of offal and rubbish, has led to an explosion in the number of feral dogs and an increasing human death toll from rabies. An unknown virus has been killing 3 species of the once numerous vultures in the last 10 years. This has led to a crisis. Habitually, butchers

threw offal outside for the vultures, which effectively solved the waste problem. The vulture's niche has now been taken over by feral dogs, the main carriers of rabies. More people now die of rabies in India than anywhere else. So alarmed has the government become about the diminished vulture population they have set up a rehabilitation center to save sick birds and release them into the wild. [View Report](#)

Unidentified Disease Creates Havoc in Remote Bajura, Nepal

12 February – ProMed reported the outbreak of an unidentified disease in remote Jukot VDC, north of Bajura district, has claimed 16 lives to date. Starting from mid-January, around 150 locals have been infected with the disease. The situation in the area is alarming, as the local sub-health post is without drugs. The disease in its initial phase is similar to the common cold. The patient dies after 10-15 days of infection. The sub-health post in the village does not contain even simple drugs. Since there are only children and women in the village, it is almost impossible to carry a patient to the headquarters through a rough 3-day walk. [View Report](#)

USSOUTHCOM

Anthrax Attacks Horses in Nicaragua

10 February – ProMed reported a virulent anthrax attack caused the deaths of 42 horses from rural communities in the municipalities of Pueblo Nuevo and Condega. Sergio Torrez Rivera, veterinarian and regional coordinator of animal health for Magfor, reported that the outbreak of the fatal disease was controlled through the massive vaccination of animals in the affected villages. Torrez indicated that this was a sporadic outbreak that had been controlled and explained that farmers had neglected to vaccinate their animals, particularly horses, resulting in the propagation of the disease. [View Report](#)

Honduras: Over 200 Cases of Dengue Fever so far this Year

10 February – ProMed reported at least 9 new cases of dengue hemorrhagic fever and 195 cases of classic dengue fever have been registered so far this year in Honduras. Schools are being fumigated to destroy the breeding grounds of the mosquito that transmits dengue fever before the school year gets under way next week, the official said. In addition, vehicles are being fumigated at border crossing stations to keep the virus from entering the Central American country. Some 32,000 cases of classic dengue and 877 cases of dengue hemorrhagic fever were reported in Honduras in 2002, resulting in 16 deaths. Honduras received aid from Cuba, Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, and other countries and international organizations to fight the epidemic, the most virulent in recent history. [View 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/Hioupdate/>.

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