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HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE

04 October 2002

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.

HOT ISSUES 2

- CDC Warns Military Personnel--Beware of Lightning 2
- Ecstasy's Brain Drain Possibly Wider Than Thought 2
- Fight the Flu! 2
- Herpes Drug Reduces Transmission 2
- Military Says Health Surveillance Network Catches Outbreaks 3
- Quebec Woman Has West Nile Virus 3
- Study Raises Questions on Transfusions for Very Ill 3
- Two More Antibiotics May Help Fight Anthrax 3
- US and Chinese Scientists Make HIV Breakthrough..... 3
- Vaccine for West Nile Virus Shows Promise 4
- West Nile Virus Update: 4

USCENTCOM 4

- Nothing Significant to Report 4

USEUCOM 4

- Israel – West Nile Virus, Human 4
- Salmonella Found in 1/3 of European Spiced Meats 4
- Spain - Diarrheal Shellfish Poisoning Toxin..... 4
- Swaziland: Food Crisis and Hunger..... 5
- Zambia - African Swine Fever Suspected..... 5
- Russia: Beijing Strains Responsible for Spread of Russian Drug-resistant Infections 5

USJFCOM..... 5

- Black Gill Syndrome, Shrimp – South Carolina..... 5
- Home Injuries Kill 20,000 a Year, Group Says 6
- J.R. Simplot Company Issues Allergy Alert on Undeclared Non-Fat Milk in Schwan's Stirfry Vegetables..... 6
- Random Testing for E. Coli Is Set for Meatpacking Sites 6
- Soap a Relic at Some Hospitals 6
- Tests Suggest Lane County, Oregon, E.Coli Spread Through Air 6
- USDA Strengthens Food Safety Policies 7
- Wisconsin Deer Facing Another Fatal Disease..... 7

USPACOM 7

- Indonesia - Rain Cuts Haze in Borneo but Health Problems Up 7

| | |
|--|---|
| India - No Mandatory HIV Test for Foreigners Now | 7 |
| Nepal - Unknown Disease Kills 32 in Makwanpur..... | 8 |
| USSOUTHCOM | 8 |
| Nothing Significant to Report | 8 |

HOT ISSUES

CDC Warns Military Personnel--Beware of Lightning

30 September – ABC news reports men and women in the armed forces face an increased risk of being injured by lightning, largely because military training and operations occur outdoors in all types of weather, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) notes in a new report. What's more, the CDC points out, military exercises often take place in parts of the country where rates of injury and death caused by lightning are especially high. Writing in the September 27th issue of its Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, the CDC notes that between 1998 and 2001, "a total of 142 lightning strikes caused 350 service member injuries and one service member death at US military installations in the United States." The bulk of lightning strikes occurred between May and September, with strikes peaking in July and August, the CDC reports. Louisiana, Georgia and Oklahoma had the highest rates of lightning strikes. Among the services, the Army had the highest lightning casualty rate and the Navy had the lowest, the study indicates. [View MMWR Report](#) [View ABC News Report](#)

Ecstasy's Brain Drain Possibly Wider Than Thought

26 September- Reuters Health reports the club drug Ecstasy may damage a broader range of brain cells than most research has suggested, according to a new study in monkeys. Researchers at Johns Hopkins University found that one round of the drug, designed to simulate what many Ecstasy users take in a night, was toxic to dopamine-producing cells in the brain. Earlier this month, US health officials reported that the number of Americans using Ecstasy went up 25% between 2000 and 2001. The full report can be found in *Science* 2002;297:2260-2263. [View Article](#)

Fight the Flu!

The Army's 2002-2003 flu policy has been published. [Click Here](#) to see the policy and for information about Influenza

Herpes Drug Reduces Transmission

29 September – Newsday reports people with genital herpes who worry about passing the virus to others should be offered a prescription drug that has been shown for the first time to reduce transmission. The drug, called Valtrex, is already widely used to treat and prevent flare-ups of genital herpes. A new study shows that it also cuts in half the chance that people will infect others through sexual contact. In the latest study, doctors tested Valtrex (valacyclovir) on 1,484 couples in which one partner had recurring flare-ups with type 2 herpes and the other was not infected. The volunteers were randomly given either daily Valtrex or a placebo, offered advice on using condoms and then followed for eight months. Two percent of those taking Valtrex passed on the virus to their partners, compared with 4 percent on the placebo. The treatment

nearly eliminated herpes symptoms in the partners, even if they caught the virus. Just half of 1 percent of those whose infected partners took Valtrex got herpes sores, compared with 2 percent in the comparison group. [View Original Report](#)

Military Says Health Surveillance Network Catches Outbreaks

21 September - Reuters reported a new U.S. military health surveillance network caught an outbreak of diarrhea at a Marine facility before doctors there were even aware of it, and could detect both sneak bioterror attacks and natural epidemics, one of the organizers said on Saturday. The network is still small but has been expanded since last year's Sept. 11 attacks and could serve as the basis for a nationwide early warning system, according to Maj. Michael Lewis, a U.S. Army medical doctor. The system, called ESSENCE, tracks reports of symptoms and the diagnoses made by military doctors. It recently added information from two large civilian health maintenance organizations. [View Original Article](#)

Quebec Woman Has West Nile Virus

27 September – Canadian Health reports the first human case of West Nile virus infection has been confirmed in Quebec. The province's health department confirmed Thursday the infection of a 50-year-old woman living in the Laurentians, north of Montreal. She has completely recovered from the illness. [View Original Source](#)

Study Raises Questions on Transfusions for Very Ill

September 24 - Reuters reports on a study where patients who received blood transfusions were more likely to die than those who did not. The findings do not prove that transfusions were to blame for the deaths, but they do caution against the overuse of transfusions, according to Dr. Jean Louis Vincent of the University of Brussels in Belgium, the study's lead author. SOURCE: The Journal of the American Medical Association 2002;288:1499-1507, 1525-1526. [View Article](#)

Two More Antibiotics May Help Fight Anthrax

30 September - Reuters Health reports researchers have identified two more antibiotics that may help prevent and treat anthrax infection in the event of a biological attack. Researchers led by Dr. Duygu Esel, a microbiologist at Erciyes University in Kayseri, Turkey, studied how well five drugs tackled 40 strains of anthrax bacteria. "Our findings show that the newer quinolones--gatifloxacin and levofloxacin--may be used for the prevention and treatment of anthrax, including inhalation anthrax." [View Original report](#)

US and Chinese Scientists Make HIV Breakthrough

26 September - Voice of America News reports a joint team of U.S. and Chinese scientists has identified a set of proteins that may prevent HIV from developing into AIDS, which could lead to breakthrough treatments for the disease. The team, led by Linqi Zhang and David Ho of the Aaron Diamond AIDS Research Center in New York City, has found that three proteins, called alpha defensins, inhibit the progression of HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, into the full-blown disease. When these proteins are present, they act like natural antibiotics, helping infected persons to live for years without developing AIDS. [View Article](#)

Vaccine for West Nile Virus Shows Promise

24 September - The Associated Press reported a vaccine to protect the elderly from the West Nile virus could be available in three years, and a way to test the blood supply against the infection may be available next summer, federal scientists told Congress. Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said that researchers had added West Nile genes to the structure of vaccine for yellow fever and that the resulting vaccine had protected animals against West Nile. [View Article](#)

West Nile Virus Update:

26 September: Eurosurveillance reports over the summer of 2002, the incidence of human West Nile virus (WNV) infection in the United States (US) increased. This report summarizes findings on the spread of WNV and associated issues. [View Article](#) [CDC Prevention Information](#)

USCENTCOM

Nothing Significant to Report

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Israel – West Nile Virus, Human

24 September - *Haaretz* reported the first fatal case of West Nile virus was announced in Israel on 23 September. The victim, an 83-year-old man from Kiryat Gat, died 2 weeks ago at Barzilai Hospital in Ashkelon. This summer, 8 people have been treated for the virus, most of them suffering light symptoms. The Environment Ministry and its Jordanian counterpart signed an agreement last month to combat the spread of West Nile virus by joint efforts to locate and destroy mosquito-hatching grounds. Mosquitoes carrying the virus have been found in numerous parts of the country, including the Jezebel Valley, the northern Negev and the Dead Sea region. [See Article](#)

Salmonella Found in 1/3 of European Spiced Meats

26 September - Reuters reports Swedish food authorities testing uncooked marinated and spiced meats imported from other European Union nations have found Salmonella bacteria in around one third of the consignments tested thus far. The meat tested was neither fresh nor cooked, but marinated or spiced meats used for kebabs or grilling. A high percentage of the meat was poultry, entering Sweden from most of the other 14 EU nations. In some cases the meat could have originated in non-EU nations. [View Article](#)

Spain - Diarrheal Shellfish Poisoning Toxin

25 September - Officials closed all mussel beds in Galicia yesterday after identifying the presence of Diarrheal shellfish poisoning (DSP) toxin in the waters. DSP is a toxin that

produces gastrointestinal symptoms such as diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, and/or abdominal pain. [Link to Article](#)

Swaziland: Food Crisis and Hunger

27 September - The food crisis in southern Africa is gaining momentum with 14.4 million people now affected. The traditionally lean months ahead spell disaster for female-headed households and orphans in particular. In Swaziland alone, the number of people in need of food assistance has been increased from 231,000 to 265,000.

[View Article](#)

Zambia - African Swine Fever Suspected

24 September - Xinhua News Agency reported Zambia has banned movement of pigs from the Lusaka province to prevent the spread of the Swine Fever from Lusaka to other provinces following the outbreak of the disease in the province 2 weeks ago. Lusaka Province Veterinary Officer Alisheke Mutemwa announced Tuesday that an action plan has been worked out to stage roadblocks in all roads leading out of the capital city of Lusaka for thorough scrutiny of pigs leaving the town. On Sat 21 September, the veterinary department destroyed 1100 pigs that were suffering from swine fever at Kyundu ranch in Lusaka. [See Article](#)

Russia: Beijing Strains Responsible for Spread of Russian Drug-resistant Infections

1 October - TB & Outbreaks Week reports researchers have elucidated the epidemiology of drug-resistant pulmonary tuberculosis strains in a hard-hit region of Russia. The Beijing Mycobacterium tuberculosis genotype is responsible for a high proportion of resistant TB cases in the Archangel Oblast. Researchers examined 119 tuberculosis strains taken over a 2-year period in the Archangel Oblast, which revealed over 40% of these strains belonged to the Beijing genotype, they said. Moreover, more than 40% of the Beijing TB strains were drug-resistant, compared with about 10% of the non-Beijing strains, study data showed. Over 90% of the Beijing isolates were part of a TB cluster, while clusters were identified for only a third of non-Beijing strains. The original article can be found in the Journal of Clinical Microbiology 2002;40(6):1930-1937. [View Original Report](#)

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Black Gill Syndrome, Shrimp – South Carolina

25 September - ProMED reports South Carolina shrimp have caught black gill syndrome, biologists say, and shrimp fishermen are worried the parasite, also called black spot, may be killing their catch. The shrimp are safe to eat, and most people discard the heads, where the affected gills are found. The parasite turns gills black and hardens them so shrimp can't breathe well. [See Article](#)

Home Injuries Kill 20,000 a Year, Group Says

September 26 - Reuters reviewed a study on home injuries where nearly 20,000 Americans die each year from falling down stairwells, tripping over lamp cords and other accidents inside their houses and apartments. The not-for-profit Home Safety Council estimated in a national report that more than 20 million medical visits result from home injuries each year. It estimated such injuries cost society nearly \$380 billion a year in medical expenses, lost quality of life and work loss. The report found falls were the most common fatal home injury, followed by poisonings, fires, inhalations, suffocation and drowning. Older male adults were more likely to die from home injuries. [View Article](#)

J.R. Simplot Company Issues Allergy Alert on Undeclared Non-Fat Milk in Schwan's Stirfry Vegetables

27 September – The [FDA](#) reports J.R. Simplot Company of Boise, Idaho, is recalling 32-ounce packages of Schwan's Stir-fry Vegetables because it may contain undeclared non-fat dry milk. People who have an allergy or severe sensitivity to milk run the risk of serious or life-threatening allergic reaction if they consume these products. The Stir-fry Vegetables were distributed nationwide through direct delivery. The product comes in a 32-ounce, printed plastic package with the Schwan's Stir-fry Vegetable label, with the code of X7217218:00 through X7217218:59 on the back panel of the package. [View FDA Report](#)

Random Testing for E. coli Is Set for Meatpacking Sites

25 September -The New York Times reports in an effort to toughen food safety policies, the Agriculture Department has announced that it will begin randomly testing for E. coli at all meatpacking plants in the United States. The department is reversing a 1998 policy that exempted some plants from such tests for the bacteria. The new policy will give the department greater authority to close plants if inspectors find contamination. [View Article](#)

Soap a Relic at Some Hospitals

29 September – [CNN](#) reports many hospitals are switching to quick-drying alcohol gels to keep hands clean as evidence builds they stop dangerous germs faster and better. The latest research, presented Saturday at a meeting of the American Society for Microbiology, suggests the alcohol-based rinses are surprisingly effective at cutting hospital germs, since they are much quicker, require no water or sink and kill more microbes. Researchers at the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Washington D.C. measured the effects of switching to the alcohol rinses two years ago. New cases of drug-resistant staph infections decreased 21 percent, while resistant enterococcus dropped 43 percent. [View Original Report](#)

Tests Suggest Lane County, Oregon, E. coli Spread Through Air

24 September – FSRIO reports the E. coli bacteria that sickened 82 people at this summer's Lane County Fair may have spread through the air inside the goat and sheep expo hall, Dr. William Keene, an epidemiologist with Oregon Health Services stated, "It's quite possible some people were exposed through airborne transmission. We don't know if it was a few or almost all of them." The story says that Keene suspects that E. coli was in the air based on samples of dust and grime he took inside the barn after the outbreak. [View Original Article](#)

USDA Strengthens Food Safety Policies

24 September – [USDA](#) reports in a continuing effort to strengthen food safety programs and protect public health, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, through its Food safety and Inspection Service, announced a series of new measures designed to reduce the incidence of E. coli O157:H7 contamination of raw ground beef. The actions are a result of FSIS's ongoing in-depth review of the current program and are based on scientific data that demonstrate the pathogen is more prevalent than previously estimated. Visit <http://www.usda.gov/news/releases/2002/09/0405.htm> to view the new measures.

Wisconsin Deer Facing Another Fatal Disease

29 September - ProMED reports a new disease has been diagnosed in deer in the state's wasting disease eradication zone. State veterinarian Vickie Cooper said Tuesday some of the deer found dead in an area west of Mount Horeb died of epizootic hemorrhagic disease, a viral disease carried by biting flies, mosquitoes, and other insects. [Link to Article](#)

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Epidemiology of Dengue Fever studied in Thai children

30 September - Virus Weekly reports Virologists with the U.S. military are studying the epidemiology of dengue viruses in young school children in Thailand. They recently reported initial findings in two articles in the American Journal of Epidemiology. The incidence of inapparent and of symptomatic dengue virus infection was 4.3% and 3.6% in 1998, 3.2% and 3.3% in 1999, and 1.4% and 0.8% in 2000, respectively. "Symptomatic dengue virus infection was responsible for 3.2%, 7.1%, and 1.1% of acute-illness school absences in 1998, 1999, and 2000, respectively. Am J Epidemiol, 2002;156(1):40-51). [View Original Report](#)

Indonesia - Rain Cuts Haze in Borneo but Health Problems Up

25 September - Reuters reports rain has helped clear the sky over some of Indonesian Borneo but suffocating smoke remains in the central part of the island where the number of people experiencing related health problems is rising, officials said on Tuesday. Meteorologists said more rain was expected to fall in the coming days but high humidity meant the haze would likely linger. Health officials said the smog in the Central Kalimantan capital of Palangkaraya had reached "a very dangerous level" and the local air-monitoring laboratory indicated the pollution index was three times above normal. The haze has hardest hit Central Kalimantan and the main airport in Palangkaraya has been closed since the beginning of the month. [View Article](#)

India - No Mandatory HIV Test for Foreigners Now

1 October - Virus Weekly reports India has decided to dispense with the requirement of mandatory HIV test for foreigners, including students, with immediate effect. In this regard, the Centre has sent the revised guidelines for HIV/Aids test of foreigners to all the states and Union territories. It was found that in the present scenario of HIV/Aids prevalence in the country, there was no justification in continuing with the mandatory HIV test of foreigners, both scientifically and epidemiologically. The Centre's decision to stop the mandatory HIV test appears to be

influenced by the opinion of World Health Organisation (WHO) on the issue. WHO feels that the requirement of mandatory HIV test of foreigners in any part of the world goes against the concept of voluntary test and counselling of affected persons. World Bank, which finances the Aids control programmes across the world, and UN Rights organisation have also opposed the mandatory HIV test. [View Original Report](#)

Nepal - Unknown Disease Kills 32 in Makwanpur

25 September - The Kathmandu Post reports an unknown disease has claimed 32 lives at a remote Makwanpur district in central Nepal. The disease, characterized by headache, nausea, fever, and giddiness started showing up the third week of September, said Raj Kumar Malla, the outgoing chairman, Village Development Committee. Victims of the disease die after 4 to 5 days of infection, affecting children the most. The area has no health facilities and locals are resorting to shamans for treatment. A medical team has been sent to investigate. [See 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/Hioupdate/>.

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ACRONYMS

ACIP - Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices
AFMIC - Armed Forces Medical Intelligence Center
AFIS – American Forces Information Service
ATSDR – Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry
AVIP - Anthrax Vaccine Immunization Program
BCG - Bacille Calmette-Guerin Vaccine against Tuberculosis
BMJ – British Medical Journal
BSE – Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy
CDC – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CDR – Communicable Disease Report (England)
CIDRAP – Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy
CNN – Cable News Network
CJD - Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease
DARPA – Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency; <http://www.darpa.mil/>
DENIX – Defense Environmental Network & Information eXchange [sic]
DHF – Dengue Hemorrhagic Fever
DHHS – Department of Health and Human Services
DoD - Department of Defense
DOE – Department of Energy
DTRA – Defense Threat Reduction Agency
EPA – Environmental Protection Agency
ESSENCE – Electronic Surveillance System for the Early Notification of Community-Based Epidemics
FDA – Food and Drug Administration
GAO – General Accounting Office
GEIS – Global Emerging Infections Systems
GPS – Global Positioning System
HIV/AIDS – Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
IFRC – International Federal of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IRIN - Integrated Regional Information Networks, part of the [UN](#) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).
NAS – National Academies of Science
NIH – National Institutes of Health
NIOSH – National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
OIE – World Organisation [sic] for Animal Health
OSHA - Occupational Safety and Health Administration
PAHO – Pan American Health Organization
PNAS – Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences
RT-PCR – Reverse Transcriptase Polymerase Chain Reaction
SCIEH – Scottish Centre [sic] for Infection and Environmental Health
TB – Tuberculosis
UK – United Kingdom – England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales
UN – United Nations
USAMRIID - United States Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases
USDA – United States Department of Agriculture
USPSTF – United States Preventive Services Task Force
vCJD - variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease
VA – Department of Veterans Affairs
VOA – Voice of America, an international multimedia broadcasting service funded by the US Government
WHO – World Health Organization
WMD – Weapons of Mass Destruction