

USACHPPM
HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE

14 March 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

Alcohol-based Rubs Won't Rid Hands of Anthrax

11 March – Reuters Health reported washing hands with waterless, alcohol-based rubs is not an effective way to get rid of the spores that carry anthrax, scientists at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill announced. However, washing contaminated hands with soap and water--be it regular or antimicrobial soap--results in a 100-fold reduction in the presence of spores. As a result of the study, Dr. David J. Weber and his colleagues are recommending that rescue vehicles carry water so emergency responders can adequately decontaminate their hands if they are exposed to anthrax-causing spores. [View Article](#)

Aspirin May Cut Risk of Colon and Throat Cancer

05 March – Reuters reported a daily dose of aspirin appears to help prevent colon polyps in people at increased risk, suggesting that the drug could offer a shield against colon cancer, researchers reported. Colon polyps are growths that, while common and usually benign, can lead to cancer in some cases. People who've had polyps removed are at increased risk of developing them again. In two separate studies, researchers found that aspirin reduced polyp recurrence among people with a history of polyps or colon cancer. [View Article](#) Reuters also reported taking low-dose aspirin regularly could cut the risk of developing cancers of the mouth, throat and esophagus. Researchers at the Institute of Pharmacological Research in Milan have now shown that among patients taking aspirin for more than 5 years for other conditions aspirin cut the risk of mouth and throat cancer by two-thirds. Despite the "encouraging" findings, though, researchers say it is too soon to recommend aspirin for warding off cancers. [View Article](#)

A Step Closer for Anthrax Vaccine

10 March – Wired News reported an alternative to the only approved vaccine for anthrax is one step closer to being tested on humans after successfully protecting rabbits from the effects of the bioterror agent. Unlike most vaccines, which are a modified version of the infectious agent, the new vaccine is made of DNA. It's being developed by Vical, a vaccine producer in San Diego. Instead of the pathogen in question (in this case, anthrax), Vical's vaccine contains the gene sequence that produces certain proteins found in the infectious agent. [View Article](#)

Drink Juice, Eat Yogurt to Avoid Bladder Infection

07 March 7 – Reuters reported women who are plagued by frequent episodes of painful urinary tract infections may get relief from simple changes in their diet, according to new research. Investigators based in Finland discovered that women who regularly drink fresh juices and eat yogurt and cheese may be less likely than others to develop urinary tract infections (UTI). The authors found that women who drank at least one daily glass of fresh juice were 34% less likely to have experienced a recent UTI. Women who reported eating milk products that contain helpful microbes known as probiotic bacteria, such as yogurt and cheese, at least three times each week were almost 80% less likely to have recently developed a UTI than women who ate similar foods less than once per week. [View Article](#)

Electron Microscopy for Rapid Diagnosis of Infectious Agents in Emergent Situations

March – The Journal of Emerging Infectious Disease published an article that discusses diagnostic electron microscopy and its advantages over enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay and nucleic acid amplification tests. After a simple and fast negative stain preparation, the undirected, “open view” of electron microscopy allows rapid morphologic identification and differential diagnosis of different agents contained in the specimen. Details for efficient sample collection, preparation, and particle enrichment are given. Applications of diagnostic electron microscopy in clinically or epidemiologically critical situations as well as in bioterrorist events are discussed. [View Article](#)

Flying Far? Watch for DVT

09 March – Health Scout News published an article on deep vein thrombosis (DVT). DVT is a serious condition characterized by blood clots in the deep veins of the legs, according to the Venous Educational Institute of America. One in every 100 people who develop DVT dies, usually from a blood clot called a pulmonary embolus that travels from the legs to the lungs. The condition is associated with all forms of long-distance travel, but airplane flights longer than five hours, where passengers remain seated and immobile, pose higher risks. Every year, DVT strikes about one in every 2,000 people in the general population, with the risk greatest in those over 40, those with a personal or family history of blood clots, those with cancer, blood diseases or heart conditions, and those who had recent surgery on the hips or knees. Although DVT can be serious, even passengers at greatest risk can reduce their chances of getting it by performing simple leg exercises or walking about during long-distance travel. [View Article](#)

Mice Experiments May Lead to Mad Cow Treatment

05 March – CNN News reported scientists working with mice have blocked the development of a fatal brain illness resembling mad cow disease -- a boost for efforts toward finding a treatment for the human version. Mice that get weekly injections of an experimental treatment have remained healthy for more than 500 days so far after getting a dose of the rogue proteins that cause the disease. Untreated mice generally died within about 200 days. The treatment sharply reduced the buildup of the dangerous proteins in the spleen, and the researchers hope that further work will show the same effect in the brain. The results are far from providing a useful treatment for the human version of mad cow disease, Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, or CJD. For one thing, the experimental treatment failed when begun in mice that had already developed symptoms. Still, the work indicates that the approach is worth pursuing, researchers from Imperial College London and University College London conclude in Thursday's issue of the journal Nature. [View Article](#)

Study: Vegetarian Diet Lowers Cholesterol

07 March – ABC News reported a new vegetarian diet emphasizing soy and soluble fiber could lower cholesterol by a surprising one-third. But finicky eaters may balk at its daily helpings of okra, eggplant and Metamucil, among other things. The Portfolio diet, as it's called, involves several trendy nutrients that have been shown separately to be good for the heart. Canadian researchers set out to see what would happen if they were combined into a single regimen. In the experiment, 25 volunteers ate either a standard low-fat diet or the Portfolio diet, while researchers watched the effects on their LDL cholesterol, which increases the risk of heart disease, and HDL, which lowers it. After a month, LDL levels fell 12 percent in those on the standard diet and 35 percent in those on the Portfolio diet. However, HDL levels were unchanged in people on the Portfolio diet. [View Article](#)

Water System Cutting Diarrheal Disease 50%

05 March – ABC News reported for a few cents each month, families in poor countries are purifying drinking water by using diluted bleach and germ-resistant jugs as part of a program that is cutting in half the deadly cases of waterborne diarrheal diseases, U.S. health officials said Wednesday. It is a low-tech approach that proponents say can pay for itself and even boost villages' economies. The pilot program has proved effective enough that the United States and a group of charities will seek to expand it to 20 developing countries. That announcement is planned for an international water meeting in Japan this month. The key is empowering some of the 1.1 billion people who drink water tainted by sewage, natural bacteria and parasites to protect themselves against some of those threats. Pilot testing in such countries as Zambia, Kenya and India show the chlorine-and-safe-storage system can cut the rate of diarrheal disease in half, Mintz said. [View Article](#)

USEUCOM

Dutch Poultry Flu Spreads

11 March – ProMed reported the Dutch government has extended restrictions on the transport of poultry to a second province, indicating that an outbreak of bird flu has spread. The agriculture ministry imposed a new ban in the southwestern Dutch province of Zeeland yesterday and said it had "serious indications" that a poultry farm there was contaminated with the highly contagious avian influenza. The Netherlands has slaughtered hundreds of thousands of chickens since health authorities first discovered an infected farm 10 days ago in the central province of Gelderland. The European Union has banned all exports of Dutch poultry until 13 Mar 2003. [View Report](#)

England: Norovirus Infection closes Hospital Wards in South West

05 March – ProMed reported staff at the Royal Cornwall Hospital and the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital are battling a new outbreak of norovirus infection. Some 130 patients and staff at the Royal Cornwall in Treliske have succumbed to vomiting and diarrhea illness caused by this virus. 10 wards are affected and 6 have been closed. Some surgical sessions have been cancelled, and GPs are being asked to keep non-essential referrals to a minimum. The virus has also led to new admissions being cancelled in one ward at the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital in Exeter. The hospital had only recently gotten back to normal after an outbreak that affected 30 patients and 50 staff. The number of reported cases of norovirus infection around the UK has increased 10-fold in the past year. [View Report](#)

Kenya: Health Alert Over Outbreak of Bilharzia

05 March – The East African Standard reported five hundred dysentery cases have been reported at the district hospital and various health centers following an outbreak of bilharzia. Public health officer Elly Nyambok said most of the reported cases have been from primary schools in Ndhiwa division. Nyambok said Ragenya primary school reported the highest number with 111, Manyuanda 108, Unga, Radienya and Miranga 48 cases each. The outbreak is alleged to drinking of stagnant water drawn from rivers and streams infected with snails. [View Article](#)

Netherlands: H7N7 Conjunctivitis; human

11 March – ProMed reported a veterinarian who visited several farms with poultry flocks infected with HPAI [highly pathogenic avian influenza] developed acute conjunctivitis. The symptoms in the first eye started 30 hours after his last farm visit; within the next 24 hours similar problems occurred in the other eye. The man did not suffer from keratitis or other signs of disease. RT-PCR targeting the matrix gene of influenza A virus using RNA isolated from the clinical sample revealed the presence of influenza A virus. Subsequently, RT-PCR amplification with primers specific for the H7 hemagglutinin and N7 neuraminidase were also positive. Direct sequencing of the HA, NA, and MA PCR products revealed sequences identical to those detected in HPAI-infected chickens for all 3 PCR fragments. The data show that the H7N7 virus

causing the current HPAI outbreak in The Netherlands may cause conjunctivitis in humans, as was reported for other H7N7 viruses detected in the past. [View Report](#)

Niger: Meningitis claims 500

07 March - The West African state of Niger said on Thu, 6 Mar 2003, meningitis had killed at least 130 people in 2003, taking the regional death toll from the disease to more than 500 in only 2 months. Niger's government said in a statement that 1172 cases had been recorded by 3 Mar 2003. Niger said 6 of the victims in its count had died of the virulent new W135 strain, which devastated Burkina Faso last year, killing 1743 people. The strain is not prevalent in Burkina Faso or Niger and was believed to have been brought to West Africa last year by Muslim pilgrims returning from Saudi Arabia. [View Report](#)

Number of Malaria Cases Drops in Maputo

03 March – AllAfrica.com reported malaria claimed 37 lives out of 432,340 cases diagnosed in 2002 in Maputo province. This is a drop of 26,092 cases, when compared with the previous year, though in 2001 a smaller number of people (31) died of the disease. The provincial chief doctor, Ivete Dimande, believes that the trend for a reduction in the number of cases is linked both to the spraying campaigns against the mosquitoes that carry the disease, and to the strengthening of public health education among the population. "Looking at the evolution of the disease, we think that the number of cases notified in the health units will drop even further in 2003 as a consequence of the spraying campaign that we are carrying out, covering more areas", said Dimande. [View Article](#)

Pet Passports Let in Diseases

11 March – ProMed reported the relaxation of rules designed to protect the UK against rabies has opened the way to the entry of other animal diseases. The Pet Travel Scheme (Pets) allows owners of companion animals to take them in and out of Britain. But animals coming from exotic disease areas abroad are now bringing new problems with them. A team of UK and French vets found 17 of the 53 dogs that had entered under Pets and 7 of the 14 that entered the UK through quarantine had one or more of the 3 pathogens (Babesiosis, Leishmaniasis, and Ehrlichiosis). They say their findings "indicate the significance of these infections as a health and welfare issue for both the animals and their owners. Should introduction of the appropriate vectors occur, or alternative methods of transmission evolve, there is risk of extension of disease into dog, cat, human, or wildlife populations which have not traveled." [View Report](#)

South Africa: KZN Records World's Lowest Cholera Fatalities

05 March – African Eye News Service reported efforts to contain the raging cholera epidemic in KwaZulu-Natal have been lauded by the United Nation's World Health Organisation (WHO). In a report to the provincial legislature on Monday, provincial health MEC Zweli Mkhize said his department had handled more than 121,000 cholera cases with 290 deaths since the start of 2000 to date. The deaths amount to a 24% fatality rate that, according to the WHO, is the lowest fatality rate yet for any cholera outbreak globally. [View Article](#)

UK (Somerset): Legionellosis Outbreak

11 March - Doctors have treated 3 people with Legionnaires' disease, which has been traced back to a leisure center at a hotel. Experts say the risk of infection at the Cricket St Thomas Hotel in Chard has been isolated. But they are warning anyone who has used the hotel's facilities in the last month to watch for symptoms. One of the people diagnosed has made a full recovery, but 2 others are still in hospital. [View Report](#)

Virulent MRSA strains containing the Panton Valentine Leukocidin gene in the Netherlands

07 March – ProMed reported methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) strains possessing the Panton Valentine Leukocidin (PVL) gene have been detected in the Netherlands recently. The PVL gene encodes a highly potent toxin, which is involved in severe skin infections and necrotising pneumonia. PVL-positive MRSA strains have also been noted in France, the United States and in Scotland. It has been suggested that the PVL MRSA is acquired in the community. Molecular subtyping by pulsed field gel electrophoresis (PFGE) on the Dutch strains has shown a predominant clone, PFGE cluster 28. The PFGE pattern of cluster 28 appears to be identical to the pattern of the French PVL MRSA clone. Identical PVL MRSA isolates (PFGE cluster 206) were found recently in 2 Dutch HIV-positive homosexual men. It is not yet known whether there is a link with the PVL MRSA strains isolated from the infected men in the USA. The significant increase in the seriousness of infections caused by PVL MRSA is a finding shared by the French group. The predominant Dutch clone (cluster 28) has so far been shown to be 100 percent resistant to fusidic acid, neomycin, and tetracycline. When testing all the PVL strains (cluster 28 plus others) the resistance percentages are approximately 60, 70, and 70, respectively. Further studies will be performed in order to gain more insight into the microbiological and epidemiological background of these virulent MRSA strains. [View Report](#)

Wales: Measles Outbreak Hits Capital

07 March – BBC News reported a dozen children have contracted measles in Cardiff - the first outbreak of the disease in the capital in 10 years. The ages of the children range from seven months to 10 years and their infections are all linked, say health experts. All the cases involve youngsters in the east of the city who have not been vaccinated, leading public health doctors to urge parents to give their children the MMR vaccine. Vaccination rates in the Bro Taf Health Authority, like those across Wales, have been falling since the controversial and unproven claim in 1998 that the combined MMR vaccine was linked to the development of autism in some children. The latest available figures show the MMR take-up rate in the health authority area has fallen to 85.7% of children, down from 87.4% in January last year. The average take-up rate for MMR in Wales is 83.8%. The Neath Port Talbot and Swansea region has the lowest take-up rate at 72%. Doctors there have warned of a measles outbreak and the area's health authority has launched an awareness campaign to encourage more parents to immunize their children. The World Health Organization recommends 95% of children in a population need to be vaccinated to prevent the disease from spreading. The number of cases in England and Wales has tripled in recent years and is at its highest since the MMR vaccine was introduced in 1988. [View Article](#)

USCENTCOM

Crimean-Congo Hemorrhagic Fever in Iran

09 March – ProMED reported that the Pasteur Institute of Iran in Tehran and the Pasteur Institute of Dakar reported on cases of Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever (CCHF) in Iran from the 1 Jan to 31 Dec 2002. In 2002, 556 sera from 252 patients were tested serologically by ELISA and molecularly by RT-PCR. Sera were tested for IgM and IgG against the following viral antigens: Rift Valley fever virus, yellow fever virus, West Nile virus, dengue virus type 2, chikungunya virus, and CCHF virus. During this period, the patients were from 8 of the 28 provinces of Iran. In 104 IgM-positive patients it was found that the most infected province in Iran is Sistan-Baluchistan with 80 IgM-positive patients (76.92 percent). Sistan-Baluchistan borders on Afghanistan and Pakistan. The other infected provinces are Isfahan, Fars, Tehran, Khuzistan, Yazd, Chaharmahal-Bakhtiyari, and Hormozgan. In 148 IgM-negative patients 8 RT-PCR positives (5.4 percent) were detected. All tested sera were negative for the other viral antigens. [View Article](#)

Saudi Arabia: Clarification on Jeddah Virus

10 March – On 03 March the HIO update reported on 7 cases of Alkhurma Virus in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia based on information reported in [ProMed](#). These seven cases were actually cases of Dengue Fever, not Alkhurma Virus. This clarification is supported by AFMIC.

USNORTHCOM

Bacteria Outbreaks Reported at Florida Beaches

07 March – CBS News reported health officials warned of extensive bacteria outbreaks at five South Florida beaches popular with spring break crowds. The bacteria can increase the risk to swimmers of developing gastrointestinal diseases, such as hepatitis A, shigellosis and cholera, which can cause severe diarrhea and intestinal pain. High levels of enterococci bacteria were detected Thursday in the water off two Fort Lauderdale beaches, Lauderdale-by-the-Sea, Pompano Beach and Gulf Stream. Health officials also found high levels of fecal coliform bacteria off Hollywood and Hallandale Beach. Additional tests were planned to determine whether warnings should be issued for those beaches as well. Health advisories were also posted for nine miles of beach in Volusia County, about 200 miles north of Fort Lauderdale. Health officials said they didn't know if the outbreaks were related. [View Article](#)

Bar Codes on Drugs Proposed

08 March – The Washington Post reported the Food and Drug Administration intends to require a supermarket-style bar code on every drug dispensed. By matching the coded label on a prescription to the code on a patient's wristband, hospitals could dramatically reduce medication errors that account for more than 7,000 deaths each year, according to one analysis. In its landmark 1999 report, "To Err is Human," the Institute of Medicine, a research panel affiliated with the National Academy of Sciences, found that as many as 98,000 Americans die each year because of preventable medical mistakes. More than 770,000 people are injured by medication

errors at a cost of \$177 billion each year, said Mary Gross of the FDA's Office of Drug Safety. [View Article](#)

Canada (B.C.): Hiker's Rabies Death Believed to be Result of Bat Bite

06 March – ProMed reported health authorities at the British Columbia Center for Disease Control reported on Tue 4 Mar 2003 that a 52-year-old Lower Mainland man has died from rabies. He is only the second person known to have died from rabies in British Columbia. The latest victim is thought to have contracted the disease from exposure to a bat, although that is not certain, said Rob Parker, deputy medical health officer for the Fraser Health Authority. [View Report](#)

Canada (Ontario): Methicillin Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*

07 March – ProMed reported the Hamilton (Ontario, Canada) Public Health and Community Services Department has investigated 5 cases of soft-tissue infection with Methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) between May and Oct 2002 at a correctional facility in southern Ontario. All 5 affected individuals presented with abscesses and cellulitis in the lower extremities. PFGE patterns did not match those of local nosocomial MRSA strains. The isolates were susceptible to tetracycline, trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole, rifampin, and clindamycin, and resistant to erythromycin and beta-lactams, which again differs from local nosocomial MRSA strains, which tend to be resistant to all the above antibiotics. No risk factors for acquiring MRSA were identified and the 5 cases were otherwise healthy. We were unable to identify a single mode of transmission, though 3 of the 5 individuals had spent time in an individual cellblock. Current efforts are being aimed at evaluating the prevalence of carriage of this strain among inmates and guards. [View Report](#)

Connecticut: Possible Avian Influenza at Egg Farm

09 March – ProMed reported Connecticut agriculture officials are investigating a possible outbreak of avian influenza at an eastern Connecticut egg farm that has led to the quarantine of 4.7 million birds. The apparent outbreak occurred at an egg farm, which has operations in Bozrah and Lebanon and controls more than 90 percent of the state's egg market. The farm produces about 12 million eggs per week. The apparent outbreak led Japan on Thursday to impose a temporary ban on poultry imports from the United States. Samples from the farm have been sent to a diagnostic laboratory in Iowa and results are expected next week. Meanwhile, traffic at the farm is strictly limited. Employees must take footbaths before entering the coops, and vehicles are being disinfected leaving and entering the property. If influenza is confirmed, the state may have to destroy the flock. [View Report](#)

Drug-resistant Germs on the Rise

09 March CNN reported drug-resistant germs are on the rise in the United States and experts predict a sharp jump in the strains of a dangerous form of strep that can overcome two common antibiotics. Researchers based at the Harvard School of Public Health studied reports from sites in eight states, measuring how common the drug resistance was in 1996 and how it increased by 1999. Penicillin resistance rose from 21.7 percent of strep strains in 1996 to 26.6 percent in 1999, and for erythromycin it increased from 10.8 percent to 20.2 percent, the team reports. In addition, using a new statistical formula that takes into account how the bacteria are

transmitted, the researchers forecast rapid growth for strains of *S. pneumoniae* that are resistant to both of the antibiotics, reaching 40.6 percent by the summer of 2004. That's up from just 8.6 percent in 1996. The report provides further support for arguments against unnecessary antibiotic use, said Marc Lipsitch, one of the researchers. For years, public health experts have warned that overuse of antibiotics -- often when they are not needed -- is leading to more and more drug-resistant bacteria. [View Article](#)

FDA Warns Against Use of Drug in Animals

04 March – World Scientist reported residue found in dairy cattle carcasses from an arthritis drug that can cause anemia and other blood disorders has led federal regulators to warn against using it on farm animals. Gloria Dunnavan, a Food and Drug Administration compliance official, said Monday that regulators have issued an order prohibiting the use of phenylbutazone, an arthritis drug, on livestock. The order emphasizes regulations on the books since 1996. Officials have not heard of anyone getting sick from eating meat containing traces of the drug, Dunnavan said. Meat samples taken by the Agriculture Department in 2000 and 2001 tested positive. Dunnavan said the agency is continuing to monitor the situation. The FDA notice warns against the drug's use on most farm animals. It still can be used on horses and dogs. [View Article](#)

Iowa: Wedding Guests Fall Ill in Ankeny; Food Tested

10 March - The Iowa Department of Public Health on Sunday began testing samples of food and drink suspected of sickening dozens of guests at a wedding reception in Ankeny. 54 people were treated for methemoglobinemia, a rare form of blood poisoning, at Des Moines hospitals Saturday. The health department Sunday began testing food and a frozen punch mix provided by a caterer, said spokesman Kevin Teale. Punch is the item of greatest suspicion but nothing is being ruled out at this point. No investigation will take place until the cause of the illness is determined. The illness, which cuts off the blood's ability to carry oxygen, can be caused by any of dozens of chemicals that are commonly found in pesticides, meat preservatives, cleaning solutions, and medications. [View Report](#)

Mysterious Tick Disease Afflicts Montana

05 March – ProMed reported scientists believe an undiscovered Lyme disease-like illness is being transmitted by wood ticks in Montana, particularly in the Yellowstone River area from Livingston downstream to Forsyth. The bulls-eye rash, fever, body aches, and lingering exhaustion caused by the illness have stumped doctors for at least a decade, said State Epidemiologist Todd Damrow. Local, state, and federal scientists are now launching an effort to crack the mystery. The state receives a "handful" of reports each year of unexplainable illnesses believed to be caused by a tick bite, Damrow said. The cases have been clustered in the Yellowstone River drainage, but reports have also come in from both Helena and Missoula. In each instance, Lyme disease has been ruled out, as has Rocky Mountain spotted fever. Antibiotics have been used successfully to treat recent cases reported to the state. Damrow doesn't know whether the illness has ever caused any deaths. Rocky Mountain Laboratory in Hamilton will help state and local officials study suspected disease-bearing ticks. Damrow said he "strongly suspects" a cousin of the Lyme disease-causing bacteria has adapted to Montana's tick population. [View Report](#)

Study: Autoimmune Diseases Common in Vietnam Vets

06 March – ABC News reported Vietnam veterans who suffer post-traumatic stress disorder are also more likely to have autoimmune diseases such as arthritis, psoriasis and hypothyroidism, a study has found. The analysis of more than 4,000 Vietnam veterans is the first to show that such stress can damage the immune system enough to cause disease. Joseph A. Boscarino, a senior scientist at the New York Academy of Medicine, used health data on Vietnam veterans that was collected by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 20 years after the men were discharged from military service. He found no increase in autoimmune disease among 2,490 Vietnam veterans compared with 1,972 others who served elsewhere during the same period. But when Boscarino pulled out the 124 Vietnam veterans who had exhibited symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder in the six months before they were studied, he found a dramatic increase. Those men were three times more likely to have an autoimmune illness than veterans not experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder. [View Article](#)

USPACOM

Acute Respiratory Syndrome in China, Hong Kong SAR and Viet Nam

12 March – ProMed reported the World Health Organization (WHO) issued a global alert about cases of atypical pneumonia. Cases of severe respiratory illness may spread to hospital staff. Since mid February 2003, WHO has been actively working to confirm reports of outbreaks of a severe form of pneumonia in Viet Nam, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR), China, & Guangdong province in China. [View Report](#)

Australia (Queensland): Dengue virus Serotype 2 Confirmed in One Patient

10 March – ProMed reported in Cairns, Australia, 3 locally acquired cases of dengue fever have been confirmed. Dengue serotype 2 has been confirmed in one of the cases. All 3 patients are residents of Cairns and became ill in mid February 2003. One of them also had a connection with Mareeba (approximately 40 km west of Cairns) during the infectious period. The primary case has not yet been identified, and there is a possibility that more people may be infected in Cairns or Mareeba. The Dengue Action Response Team (DART) is carrying out extensive mosquito surveillance and eradication in line with the protocols established in the Dengue Fever Management Plan for North Queensland. [View Report](#)

Indonesia: Dengue and Chikungunya Outbreaks

10 March - An outbreak of dengue fever and chikungunya disease has claimed the lives of 13 people in Cirebon, West Java, over the past 2 months. Dadang Prihadi, the Head of the Cirebon Health Office, said that at least 315 people in the regency were infected with the mosquito-borne diseases. Over the last 2 months officials have recorded 216 cases of dengue fever and 99 cases of chikungunya. The patients who died were those who didn't get medical treatment in time. In addition, An outbreak of dengue fever in South Sulawesi over the past 2 months has killed at least 23 people and hospitalized 546 others, signaling the possibility of an increase over last year's 38 deaths, a local health official said. Dengue fever has affected almost all regencies and cities in South Sulawesi, said the head of the province's health office. Officials are expecting the number of victims will increase, since not all cities and regencies have reported

the dengue fever situation in their areas. The highest number of reported dengue fever cases had been recorded in the province's capital city, Makassar, where 12 had died and 289 others fallen ill. In 2002, the total death toll amounted to 38 compared to 23 in the first 2 months of 2003. The increase in cases is attributed to ineffective efforts to fight the disease. [View Report](#)

Philippine Children to Get War-Trauma Counseling

05 March – Reuters reported The Philippines is offering trauma counseling for thousands of school children displaced by fighting between soldiers and Muslim rebels in the south, officials said. "We are now focusing on psycho-social counseling for these students because they are in a state of trauma due to the ongoing war in their areas," said Ramon Bacani, education undersecretary for regional operations. Trainers from the National Center for Mental Health have been sent to provide trauma treatment at evacuation centers, where tens of thousands of villagers have sought refuge. [View Article](#)

Polio Cases Up Sharply in India, U.S. Officials Say

07 March – Reuters reported polio cases in India rose more than five-fold in 2002 as vaccination programs failed to reach many children in high-risk areas. In 2002, 1,556 cases of wild poliovirus were detected in India, up from 268 cases a year earlier. The increase in India dealt a setback to World Health Organization efforts to eradicate polio worldwide by 2005. Of the new cases detected, 1,337, or 86 percent, were in the northern states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. [View Article](#)

Successful Cervical Cancer Screening Tested in Thailand

07 March – VOA News reported a successful cervical cancer screening experiment in rural Thailand has shown that developing countries can combat a leading women's health threat cheaply with limited technology. Thai and U.S. public health experts say a simple vinegar test combined with immediate treatment in a single visit offers hope for fighting this scourge in poor parts of the world. Johns Hopkins University gynecologist Paul Blumenthal helped design the project that utilizes materials available locally. Dr. Blumenthal's Johns Hopkins team and doctors from the Royal Thai College of Obstetrics and Gynecology combined an inexpensive vinegar wash test and a simple visual inspection. The vinegar solution bleaches abnormal cells, which become visible to the naked eye. [View Article](#)

USSOUTHCOM

Brazil (Minas Gerais): Death Due to Hantavirus Infection in Pratapolis

08 March – ProMed reported the personnel of the Division of Epidemiology of the State Secretariat of Health (SES) [of Minas Gerais] confirmed on 27 Feb 2003 a death due to Hantavirus infection in the municipality of Pratapolis, the southwest of the state. The technical personnel issued precautions that the population should take, not only against Hantavirus but also with all forms of hemorrhagic fevers. [View Report](#)

Columbia: Swine Fever Outbreak

10 March – ProMed reported the state of Valle is under alert due to an outbreak of classical swine fever (CSF) in the neighboring state of Quindio. This year, authorities have detected the disease in the municipalities of Calarca, Circasia, Armenia, Filandia, and La Tebaida, in the state of Quindio. The Secretary of Agriculture and Fisheries of Valle, said that a barrier must be put in place in the state and that the local mayors and directors of the Municipal Agricultural Technical Assistance Unit (UMATA) in the different municipalities have been urged to take the necessary steps to prevent the introduction of the disease into the state. The secretary added that, due to their geographic location, the high-risk municipalities are Obando, Caicedonia, Sevilla, Cartago, Ulloa, and Alcala. The Quindio branch of the Colombian Institute of Agriculture (ICA), has declared a quarantine in that region of the country. The resolution bans the transport of pigs to and from the jurisdiction of this Colombian state. In order to prevent the dissemination of the disease, vaccination of all swine is now mandatory. [View Report](#)

Ecuador: 3 More Dengue Cases in Guayaquil Area

10 March – ProMed reported 3 new cases of classic dengue fever have been reported from places close to Guayaquil, Ecuador. According to hospital director Ricardo Giler, during January and February 2003, 37 cases of dengue hemorrhagic fever have been reported nationwide, 16 of them from Guayaquil. There have been no deaths. [View Report](#)

Insecticide Poisoning in Argentina: Chickens, Dogs

09 March – ProMED reported more than 100 chickens and 30 dogs died this week, possibly because of poisoning, in Basavilbaso, previously a Jewish colony, in the province of Entre Rios, department of Uruguay. The deaths coincided with the fumigation and spraying of insecticides. Local experts are investigating the cause and affirm that the symptoms point to some toxic agent but that, as of yesterday, they had not yet identified the product responsible for the deaths. [View Article](#)

Paraguay: Cases of Dengue Virus Type 3 Reported in City on Brazil Border

10 March – ProMed reported dengue fever cases are on the rise in the Paraguayan city of Pedro Juan Caballero on the border with Brazil, where around 20 cases of the disease have been reported. On 21 Feb 2003 the city reported 3 cases of dengue virus type 3, in contrast to the dengue virus serotype 1 normally recorded in this region, leading Paraguayan authorities to impose an epidemiological alert. Since then, Carlos Maria Romero, who heads a task force working to eradicate the disease, stated that 18 new cases have been reported in this region. Dengue sufferers were being treated on an outpatient basis. Another case was recorded in Luque, a municipality near Asuncion, and still another in the province of San Pedro, north of the capital, Romero said. [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/Hiupdate/>.

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