

**USACHPPM**  
**HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE**

26 September 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.

<b>HOT TOPICS</b> .....	<b>2</b>
Cloned Cells Cure Brain Disease in Mice .....	2
Cranberry Component Linked to Reduced Stroke Damage .....	2
Docs' Cell Phones May Spread Hospital Infections .....	2
Experts Warn Warfarin Users about Cranberry Juice .....	2
First Steps Towards a Vaccine for Pancreatic Cancer .....	3
Health Experts Not Heeding Skin Cancer Warnings .....	3
HIV 'Scan' Spots Virus in Hiding .....	3
New Study Shows Prayer Has Positive Effect on Health .....	3
No Convincing Evidence Psychological Debriefing Reduces Incidence of PTSD .....	3
Osteoporosis Drugs No Better in Combination-Study .....	4
Progress Toward Global Eradication of Dracunculiasis, January--June 2003 .....	4
Researchers ID Stroke-Risk Gene .....	4
Stress Test Can Gauge Women's Heart Risk .....	4
Study: Even Mid-life Diet Change Can Extend Life .....	5
Tai Chi Class Boosts Shingles Immunity .....	5
<b>USEUCOM</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Britons Condemned as Europe's Worst Binge Drinkers .....	5
France Recalls Internationally Distributed Halal Meat Products Due to Type B Botulism Outbreak .....	5
Ireland <i>Escherichia coli</i> Outbreak: Toll Rises to 12 .....	6
Typhoid Registered in Armenia .....	6
<b>USCENTCOM</b> .....	<b>6</b>
Afghanistan: Cholera and Whooping Cough Outbreaks .....	6
Survey Reveals Hypertension Cases on the Rise in UAE .....	6
<b>USNORTHCOM</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Better Nurse Training Means Fewer Deaths .....	7
Decline in Annual Incidence of Varicella --- Selected States, 1990--2001 .....	7
Gulf War Vets Risk Paralyzing Disease .....	7
Homeland Security Company Passes US Laboratory Testing Against Chemical Agents .....	7
Kansas: Crypto Outbreak Spreads to 5 More Counties .....	7
Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behaviors About West Nile Virus --- Connecticut, 2002 .....	8
Potent Virus Brings Warnings to Get Flu Shot .....	8
<b>USPACOM</b> .....	<b>9</b>
After Anthrax, Now It's Ricin Terror .....	9
India: Dengue Fever Update .....	9
Indonesia (Ambon): Outbreak of Rabies Involving Mainly Children .....	9

Indonesia: Dengue Fever Update .....	10
Panic Spreads in Indian State on Fatal Mystery Disease .....	10
Public Health Dispatch: Measles Epidemic --- Majuro Atoll, Republic of the Marshall Islands, July 13--September 13, 2003.....	10
Singapore Says Lab Accident Caused New SARS Case .....	10
South Korea: Pathogen Associated with Conjunctivitis Outbreak.....	11
US Seeks Thai Help on Germ Research .....	11
Vietnam: Dengue Fever Update.....	11
Water in India's Uttar Pradesh Contaminated by Carcinogens .....	11
<b>USSOUTHCOM .....</b>	<b>12</b>
UN Launches Hepatitis B Vaccine Campaign in Peru .....	12

## HOT TOPICS

### Cloned Cells Cure Brain Disease in Mice

22 September – ABC News Online reported US researchers say they have used cloned cells to treat a [Parkinson](#)-like disease in mice and claim it provided a good experimental basis for testing whether so-called therapeutic cloning will work. While they did not clone each individual mouse, the cells they used were from cloned embryos and relieved the symptoms of artificially induced Parkinson's, they reported in this week's issue of the journal Nature Biotechnology. [View Article](#)

### Cranberry Component Linked to Reduced Stroke Damage

22 September – Science Blog reported every 45 seconds, someone in America experiences a [stroke](#). This week, researchers announced that compounds in cranberry may potentially offer a way to reduce stroke damage. A preliminary rat cell tissue study – led by principal investigator Dr. Catherine Neto at the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth, who presented the findings at the American Chemical Society meeting in New York – suggests that cranberry may protect against the brain cell damage that occurs during a stroke. According to the study, cranberry may reduce the stroke's severity via an antioxidant mechanism during the early stages of stroke, when the most damage occurs. [View Article](#)

### Docs' Cell Phones May Spread Hospital Infections

17 September – Reuters reported mobile phones used by healthcare personnel in the hospital can spread dangerous infectious agents, according to investigators in Israel. In 2002, Dr. Abraham Borer, of Soroka University Medical Center in Beer-Sheva, and others randomly screened 124 hospital personnel for the germ *Acinetobacter baumannii*, a common source of [in-hospital infections](#). They found that 12 percent of healthcare providers' cell phones were contaminated with the bug, the researchers reported. The results are disturbing because *Acinetobacter baumannii* has the propensity to develop resistance to almost all available antibiotics. It is especially dangerous because it "can survive on dry surfaces for a long period of time," Borer told Reuters Health. [View Article](#)

### Experts Warn Warfarin Users about Cranberry Juice

18 September – Reuters reported patients taking the anti-clotting drug warfarin should limit or avoid drinking cranberry juice because of the risk of hemorrhage, British drug safety experts said. The Committee on Safety of Medicines said it had received five reports -- one fatal -- suggesting the juice and warfarin interact, increasing the potency of the drug. "Until this possible interaction between cranberry juice and warfarin has been investigated further, it would be prudent for patients taking

warfarin to be advised to limit or avoid drinking it," the committee said. The fatal hemorrhage case involved a man whose blood clotting levels changed dramatically six weeks after starting to drink cranberry juice, it reported in its newsletter "Current Problems in Pharmacovigilance." [View Article](#)

## First Steps Towards a Vaccine for Pancreatic Cancer

22 September – Eurekalert reported research carried out in the United States has raised the hope that one day there could be a vaccine against [pancreatic cancer](#) – one of the most difficult cancers to treat successfully. Dr Robert Maki told The European Cancer Conference that preliminary work with a cancer vaccine created from a heat-shock protein taken from the patient's own tumor had resulted in one patient out of the ten vaccinated still alive and without disease after five years, and two more alive and without disease after more than two years. The typical survival after surgery for pancreas cancer is 14-15 months. [View Article](#)

## Health Experts Not Heeding Skin Cancer Warnings

22 September – Reuters reported even the experts are failing to heed warnings about [skin cancer](#), a conference heard Monday. A British nurse who developed a test about skin cancer awareness said the experts may know all about the dangers, but they were still getting too much sun. Kerry Guile, a senior chemotherapy nurse at St George's Hospital in London gave the test, which includes 30 questions about skin cancer awareness and how to protect against it, to four groups of health workers, including cancer specialists and nurses, and to the public. Not surprisingly, the cancer experts knew most about the disease, but it did not translate into behavior changes. [View Article](#)

## HIV 'Scan' Spots Virus in Hiding

18 September – BBC News reported a type of scan may be able to pick out areas where the [AIDS](#) virus is active - allowing doctors to plan new treatments for the infection. The Positron Emission Tomography scan (PET) reveals areas where immune tissue is actively fighting HIV. The research, published in the Lancet, indicates that different tissues are active depending on the length of infection. US scientists say that one day, surgery or radiotherapy might tackle HIV. However, this idea has been questioned by UK HIV experts, who say that the virus is likely to be present in too many places in the body to make localized therapies an option. [View Article](#)

## New Study Shows Prayer Has Positive Effect on Health

20 September – VOA News reported a number of studies have shown that individuals who pray regularly and attend religious services stay healthier and live longer than those who rarely or never go to a church, synagogue or mosque. Duke University recently released a study of 4,000 women and men of different faiths. All the participants were 65 or older. The study found that the relative risk of dying was 46 percent lower for those who frequently attend religious services. [View Article](#)

## No Convincing Evidence Psychological Debriefing Reduces Incidence of PTSD

22 September – Science Blog reported the most widely used [PTSD](#) intervention, psychological debriefing, seeks to prevent symptoms by having trauma survivors share memories or relive the experience. Unfortunately, a number of scientific studies have raised substantial concerns about the actual impact this and similar methods. A new report from the American Psychological Society examining the current body of research on the efficacy of psychological debriefing found "no convincing evidence that debriefing reduces the incidence of PTSD, and some controlled studies suggest that it may impede natural recovery from trauma." [view Article](#)

## Osteoporosis Drugs No Better in Combination-Study

20 September – Reuters reported combining an experimental calcium-controlling hormone that builds bone with a popular [osteoporosis](#) drug does not increase bone density any more than the hormone alone, researchers said. The interim results come from a one-year study, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health, in 238 post-menopausal women. Some received only Preos, a bioengineered full-length version of human parathyroid hormone, some only Fosamax, an osteoporosis drug sold by Merck & Co., while others were treated with both drugs. Bone mineral density at the spine increased in all the treatment groups, but was highest, at a rate of 6.3 percent, in the parathyroid hormone group. The volume of spongy bone at the center of the spine also increased, but the 24 percent increase in the parathyroid hormone group was about twice that found in either of the other groups.

[View Article](#)

## Progress Toward Global Eradication of Dracunculiasis, January--June 2003

19 September – The CDC reported when the World Health Assembly adopted a resolution calling for the eradication of [dracunculiasis \(Guinea worm disease\)](#), an estimated 3.5 million persons in 20 countries had the disease, and approximately 120 million persons were at risk for infection. By the end of 2002, annual incidence of the disease had been reduced >98%. This report describes the status of the global Dracunculiasis Eradication Program (DEP)\* as of June 2003. The data indicate that incidence of the disease outside Ghana and Sudan has declined substantially since June 2002. Continuing efforts in all countries in which the disease is endemic, intensified efforts in Ghana and an end to the ongoing war in Sudan are required for the eradication of dracunculiasis. [View Article](#)

## Researchers ID Stroke-Risk Gene

22 September – CBS News reported researchers in Iceland have identified a gene associated with increased risk for [stroke](#), the third leading cause of death in developed countries that kills 160,000 people each year in the United States alone. Those who have the stroke-susceptibility gene have a three to five times greater risk of ischemic stroke, researchers at Reykjavik-based deCODE Genetics said. [view Article](#)

## Stress Test Can Gauge Women's Heart Risk

23 September – Reuters reported a study said on Tuesday that contrary to previous thought, a woman's stamina on the treadmill exam can help gauge her risk. Stress tests detect abnormal heartbeats in some women that scientists believe are caused by hormonal differences between women and men, and are not necessarily a sign of heart disease. But focusing on a woman's fitness during the treadmill test -- how long she can exercise as her heart beats faster and the time it takes her heartbeat to return to normal after she stops -- does predict her risk of eventually dying from heart disease, said study author Samia Mora of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. In a 20-year followup study of nearly 3,000 women who took treadmill tests in the 1970s, the women who performed below average were 3.5 times more likely to die of heart disease compared to those who performed better than average. In the report published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, Mora concluded that regular exercise was more important than losing weight, lowering blood pressure or reducing cholesterol levels in lessening a woman's risk of heart attack or stroke. Another journal, Circulation, published a study earlier this month that found exercise capacity was more accurate at predicting heart disease in women than in men. [View Article](#)

## Study: Even Mid-life Diet Change Can Extend Life

19 September – CNN News reported it has long been known that laboratory animals live longer on a low-calorie diet. Now a study suggests that even if sensible eating is delayed until middle age, health can be improved and life extended. A study on diet and life in the journal *Science* dealt only with laboratory fruit flies, but researchers said some of the same effects may apply to mammals, perhaps even humans. In the study, British researchers compared the effects of different calorie-restricted diets on the mortality of fruit flies. They found that fruit flies on restricted diets lived about 90 days, twice as long as those fed on a normal diet. But the scientists also found that when heavily fed fruit flies were switched at middle age -- day 14 to 22 -- to leaner diets, then the animals converted from the shorter life pattern of the overfed to the longer-lived pattern of flies that had been on a restricted diet all their lives. [View Article](#)

## Tai Chi Class Boosts Shingles Immunity

22 September – Eurekalert reported UCLA Neuropsychiatric Institute researchers report that older adults in a 15-week Tai Chi class saw immunity factors that suppress [shingles](#) soar 50 percent. In addition, participants showed significant improvement in their physical health and ability to move through their day. Appearing in the September edition of the journal *Psychosomatic Medicine*, findings of the randomized, controlled clinical trial are the first to demonstrate a positive, virus-specific immune response to a behavioral intervention. [View Article](#)

# USEUCOM

## Britons Condemned as Europe's Worst Binge Drinkers

19 September – Reuters reported Britons are the worst binge drinkers in Europe and women are catching up with men in the heavy drinking stakes, the government said, urging a "more civilized" late-night culture. A report by Downing Street's strategy unit found that while Britons drink less than most of the continental neighbors, they drink more intensively. "In the UK, binge drinking accounts for 40 percent of all drinking occasions by men and 22 percent by women," the unit said in a report designed to inform government policy on alcohol abuse. That put Britain at the top of the binge league table, ahead of Sweden and Denmark, and way ahead of Germany, Italy and France, where binge drinking accounted for less than 15 percent of all consumption. [View Article](#)

## France Recalls Internationally Distributed Halal Meat Products Due to Type B Botulism Outbreak

22 September – ProMed reported 4 cases of botulism linked to consumption of contaminated halal (meat from animals killed according to Muslim law) sausage made from beef and poultry meat, were notified by the local French health authorities from 2 departments on 1 Sep 2003. The presence of [botulinum toxin type B](#) was confirmed in serum specimens of all 4 cases. All 4 patients had relatively mild symptoms (difficulty in swallowing, blurred and double vision), with onset on 25 Aug 2003. All were admitted to hospital and have now recovered. Products from the implicated producer are known to have been distributed throughout France and exported to Italy and the Comoros islands, but no other cases have so far been reported. All 4 patients had eaten halal sausage from the same producer. On 5 Sep 2003, the national Veterinary and Food Administration recalled the implicated batches of beef poultry sausage. On 12 Sep 2003, the product recall was extended to all meat products from the implicated producer with a 'use by' date of 12 Mar 2004 or earlier. A European alert

was issued through the European Commission's weekly Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed after investigations showed that products from the implicated production plant had been distributed in Italy and the Comoros islands. [View Report](#)

## Ireland *Escherichia coli* Outbreak: Toll Rises to 12

18 September – ProMed reported the number of people suffering from [E. coli O157](#) infection in Antrim has risen to 12. The latest victims are believed to be relatives of children from the day nursery where the outbreak was first detected. The Northern Health Board has said it is working towards finding the source of the outbreak, which has already infected 9 children at the nursery. Laura's Lodge Day Nursery closed voluntarily last Thu, 11 Sep 2003, following advice from environmental health officers and the Northern Health Board. [View Report](#)

## Typhoid Registered in Armenia

22 September – ProMed reported according to a Press Center correspondent, an outbreak of [typhoid](#) was reported in Megri, the most southern part of Armenia, which borders with Iran. Symptoms of typhoid were recently reported in a 12-year-old schoolboy. The boy was immediately sent to Yerevan (the capital of Armenia) for treatment. As of Thu, 18 Sep 2003, the number of individuals diagnosed with the infection is close to 20, and there is an assumption that it will rise. Local physicians are trying to determine the cause of the infection in order to localize it and prevent an epidemic. One of the possible hypotheses is that it has been caused by contaminated drinking water sources. [View Report](#)  
[View Report 2](#)

# USCENTCOM

## Afghanistan: Cholera and Whooping Cough Outbreaks

18 September – IRIN News reported following a week of unconfirmed reports of a [cholera](#) outbreak in the border district of Spin Boldak in the southern province of Kandahar, the World Health Organization (WHO) said it had recorded 35 cases with seven fatalities. WHO also reported an outbreak of [whooping cough](#) in the Ragh district of the northeastern province of Badakhshan with a number of new cases. Based on reports, there were 115 cases and 12 children had died so far. [View Article](#)

## Survey Reveals Hypertension Cases on the Rise in UAE

20 September – Gulf News reported more than a quarter of UAE nationals suffer from [high blood pressure](#), according to a Ministry of Health survey which sheds fresh light on worrying health trends in the country. Like other cardiovascular complications, lifestyle plays an important role in the increasing prevalence of the disorder, experts say. And it could mean that the UAE is sitting on a health time bomb for strokes, heart attacks, kidney disease and other ailments. A sedentary lifestyle is said to be most to blame, combined with an unhealthy diet. Headed by Undersecretary Abdul Rahim Ja'afar, the nationwide survey found that 27 per cent of the population will fall victim to the disease. [View Article](#)

# USNORTHCOM

## Better Nurse Training Means Fewer Deaths

23 September – UPI reported the ongoing nursing shortage in the United States has forced some hospitals to rely on nurses with less than a college education as they scramble to fill vacancies but new research suggests the practice can yield deadly consequences for patients. The study, the first of its kind, reveals patients undergoing surgeries at hospitals where a greater proportion of nurses have obtained a bachelor's or higher degree experienced a lower rate of death than patients at hospitals where most nurses had only associate degrees. [View Article](#)

## Decline in Annual Incidence of Varicella --- Selected States, 1990--2001

19 September – The CDC published an MMWR report which summarizes trends in the annual reported incidence of [varicella disease](#) in selected states during 1990--2001. The findings underscore the continued need to improve varicella surveillance to monitor the impact of the varicella vaccination program and assess any changes in varicella transmission and disease. [View Report](#)

## Gulf War Vets Risk Paralyzing Disease

22 September — MSNBC News reported two studies have found a higher than normal risk of [Lou Gehrig's disease](#) among Gulf War veterans. While ALS is far from common among the veterans, it has appeared more than expected and at younger-than-usual ages, the separate studies found. One of the studies was done by Dr. Robert Haley, of the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas —who has found much if not most of the published medical evidence supporting the idea of Gulf War Syndrome. A second study by the U.S Department of Veterans Affairs and National Institutes of Health reaches similar conclusions. Both were published in the journal Neurology. [View Article](#)

## Homeland Security Company Passes US Laboratory Testing Against Chemical Agents

16 September – PRN Newswire reported a Cornelius, N.C. based company that recently acquired the exclusive distribution rights to a multi layer plastic sheeting material designed to protect citizens against [biochemical terrorist attacks](#) has passed U.S. military testing standards. Home Guard, Inc. has begun distribution of a safe room product, manufactured from material which has been used since 1993 by the Israeli Defense Forces for protection against chemical warfare. The material is also utilized extensively in residential safe rooms throughout Israel. The testing, which ended after 6 hours indicated no penetration of the deadly agents. [View Article](#)

## Kansas: Crypto Outbreak Spreads to 5 More Counties

23 September – ProMed reported Topeka and State health officials said an outbreak of [cryptosporidiosis](#) in Douglas County has extended to 5 more counties. "Some of these cases are connected to the Douglas County outbreak, while others have not yet been linked," the Kansas Department of Health and Environment said in a news release. More than 80 people in Douglas County have been diagnosed with the illness. Health officials have been under fire for knowing about crypto cases in late July 2003 but not alerting the public for nearly a month. [View Report](#)

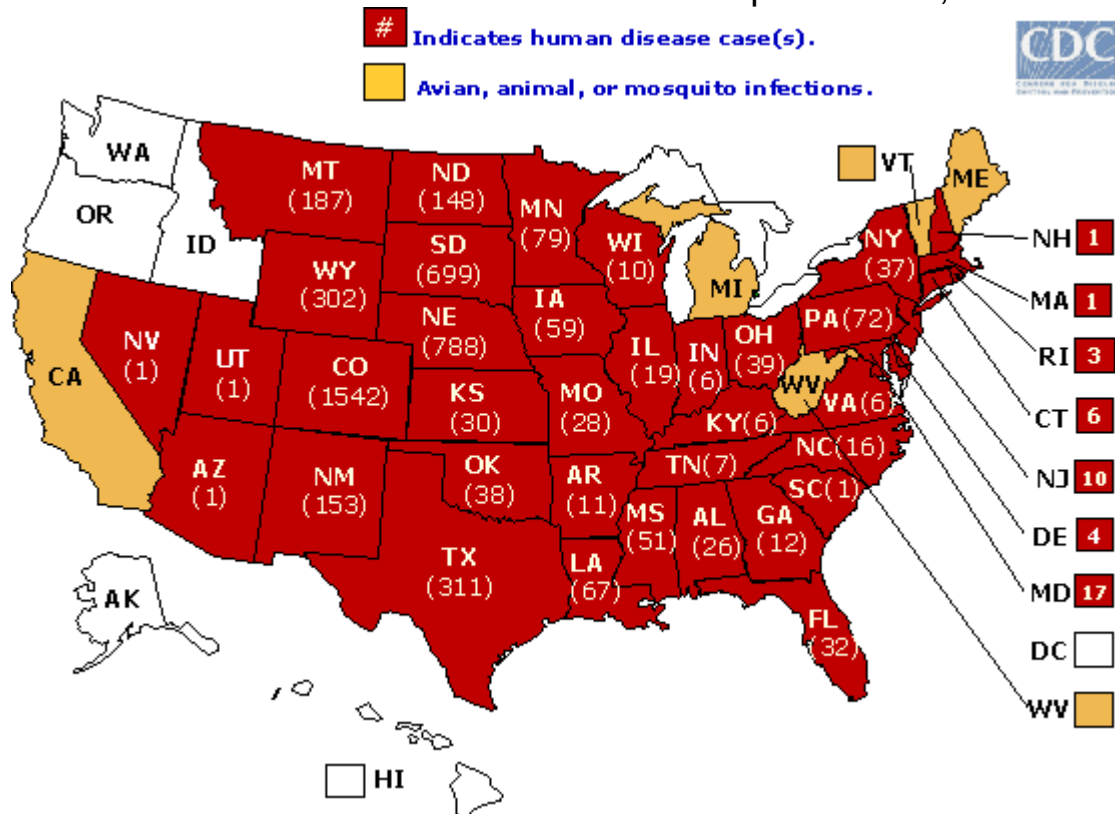
## Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behaviors About West Nile Virus --- Connecticut, 2002

19 September – The CDC published an MMWR report which assessed the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors about [WNV](#) during the transmission season in Connecticut during August--November 2002. The findings in this report document high awareness of WNV and knowledge of elderly persons being at risk for severe illness. Findings underscore the need for continued public education about the risk for WNV infection and the use of PPBs and the need for regular systematic evaluations of knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors to refine and improve public health messages effectively. [View Article](#)

## Potent Virus Brings Warnings to Get Flu Shot

24 September – USA Today reported the CDC is urging Americans to get flu shots. A rare abundance of 85.5 million doses of [flu vaccine](#) has enabled the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to suspend its usual recommendation that doctors vaccinate only those in the high-risk groups before giving the vaccine to others. The flu season drawing to a close in Australia and New Zealand features an especially virulent virus that is headed our way this fall, CDC Director Julie Gerberding said. Influenza kills an average of 36,000 in the USA each year, new research shows, nearly twice the previous estimate. About 20% of the population will become infected, and 114,000 people will be hospitalized. Most vulnerable are people 50 and older and those with chronic heart, lung and kidney diseases. [View Article](#)

## West Nile Virus in the United States as of September 24, 2003



[View Source](#)



# USPACOM

## After Anthrax, Now It's Ricin Terror

19 September – The Central Chronicle reported security agencies fear that terrorist outfits operating in India could make use of [ricin](#), which has potency twice that of a cobra's venom, to launch biological attacks. The Al-Qaeda's recent reference to the Kashmir imbroglio gave strong indication that militants operating in the Valley had strong links with the international terrorist outfit, which possessed the dangerous toxin, a senior official at the Home Ministry said. The official quoting intelligence reports noted that the Al-Qaeda leadership had previously disseminated information to its militants about the production and employment of ricin....The current wisdom among biological weapons experts is that ricin, which is used in India to kill livestock, is more likely to be a potential tool in assassinations or in a limited space for maximum effect than as a weapon of mass destruction.”

[View Article](#)

## India: Dengue Fever Update

22 September – ProMed reported on a number of [Dengue Fever](#) outbreaks in India. In Gujarat, 2 people died from Dengue Sunday at the Shardaben municipal hospital, Ahmedabad. Medical professionals in Vadodara city are on high alert after 2 people died of dengue fever recently. Another 8-10 cases have been reported from various hospitals in the city. Most of the cases reported are from Navayard, Wadi, Raopura, Tarsali and Manjalpur. The deceased were children; a 3-year-old from Wadi and a 7-year-old from Navayard, who were admitted to KG Patel Children's Hospital. In New Delhi, 4 patients suspected to be suffering from dengue fever, including relatives of All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) employees, were admitted to the hospital on Thursday 18 Sep 2003. New Delhi Medical Center health officials confirmed the same. In South Delhi, At least 5 persons have died of suspected dengue in Jal Vihar near Lajpat Nagar Central Market this month, and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) apparently came to know about it only on Friday. The deceased had similar symptoms of high fever and died within 3-4 days of falling ill. On Saturday, the civic body ordered an inquiry into the deaths, all of which have been reported from the "Madrasi Colony" of Jal Vihar. The colony has more than 2,500 jhuggis [slum dwellings] that line a railway track amid heaps of filth and stagnated water. Health authorities have confirmed 9 cases of dengue in Nasik of west India's Maharashtra state. Fifty six blood samples were collected from different parts of the city and sent to the National Virus Research Laboratory in Pune of the state. 9 of them were found positive. The health department has reportedly examined 18,293 houses and also given guidance to the citizens. A total of 10,535 containers were examined, 173 of which were found with mosquito larvae. Notices have also been issued to owners of septic tanks. [View Report](#)

## Indonesia (Ambon): Outbreak of Rabies Involving Mainly Children

23 September – ProMed reported the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) expressed grave concern over the ongoing epidemic of [rabies](#) in Maluku island of Ambon, where the victims are mostly children. As of Mon 22 Sep 2003, at least 540 cases of rabies had been reported and 11 people, mostly children, had died. Coordinator of UNICEF's Ambon branch Willy Kumurur said here on Mon 22 Sep 2003 that the children in Maluku province were facing a number of problems. "[Conditions have] prompted UNICEF to cooperate with the Maluku provincial government in the area of health and educational programs," he said. However, since the rabies cases in Ambon are the responsibility of the World Health Organization (WHO), he stated that the UNICEF had no competence to do so. [View Report](#)

## Indonesia: Dengue Fever Update

22 September – ProMed reported an outbreak of [Dengue Fever](#) has hit several regencies in North Sumatra in Indonesia this year, leaving at least 12 people, mostly children, dead and 280 others hospitalized. The disease started to spread last January [2003], but the 10 deaths were just recorded between March and September [2003]. According to data from the North Sumatra provincial health office, the number of dengue fever cases stood at 280 between 15 Jan and September 2003. Responding to the controversy over the swallow aviaries that are believed to be the breeding places of *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes in the province, the health office has sent a team to inspect 60 of the 600 such aviaries in Medan. The environmental health technical center at the Medan health office recently found that 90 percent of the swallow aviaries served as breeding places for the disease-carrying mosquitoes. Swallows' nests, cemented together by the birds' saliva, are used in traditional medicine and are a major source of income in North Sumatra. [View Report](#)

## Panic Spreads in Indian State on Fatal Mystery Disease

18 September – ProMed reported panic is spreading in India's northern Himachal Pradesh state after the deaths of 10 people from a mystery disease. Doctors in the state's capital Shimla say the condition of 30 other patients is also critical. At least 100 people have taken symptomatic treatment for the mystery fever in the last 3 weeks. Most of the patients who were admitted to hospital complained of high fever and severe headaches. While doctors have yet to diagnose the disease, relatives of those affected are fearing the return of a killer plague. They are accusing hospital authorities of negligence, saying patients are being forced to share beds. This, they allege, has raised fears of further spread of the disease. Alarmed at the rising death toll and the unabated inflow of fever patients with varied clinical manifestations from across Himachal, doctors are now looking to the team from the National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD), Delhi. [View Report](#) [View Report 2](#)

## Public Health Dispatch: Measles Epidemic --- Majuro Atoll, Republic of the Marshall Islands, July 13--September 13, 2003

19 September – The CDC reported During July 13--September 13, 2003, a total of 647 clinically diagnosed [measles](#) cases were reported on Majuro Atoll in the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI). An additional 74 suspected measles cases are under investigation. Of the 647 cases, 15 (2%) are laboratory confirmed. The age of patients ranged from 2 weeks to 43 years (median: 12 years); 479 (74%) patients were aged <20 years. The overall measles incidence on Majuro Atoll is 26 cases per 1,000 population. The incidence is highest among infants aged <1 year (160 per 1,000 population), followed by children aged 1--4 years (40). To stop measles transmission, the Ministry of Health in RMI recommended measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine (MMR) for all infants aged 6--11 months and all persons aged 1--40 years who did not have documented proof of measles immunity. To prevent spread from Majuro Atoll, vaccination campaigns were conducted in other atolls and islands in RMI. The Ministry of Health suspended travel of sea vessels and airlines from Majuro Atoll until vaccination campaigns had been completed in other atolls and islands, and required proof of MMR vaccination for all travelers leaving Majuro Atoll for other atolls or islands or for international destinations. The source of importation of the measles virus to Majuro Atoll has not yet been determined, but the H1 genotype found in this outbreak is common in Asia, and the specific strain has been reported recently in measles cases from Japan and China. [View Report](#)

## Singapore Says Lab Accident Caused New SARS Case

23 September – Reuters reported an investigation led by the World Health Organization says the world's first [SARS](#) case in three months was the result of an accident at a government-run laboratory

in Singapore that was researching the disease. The man, a 27-year-old Singaporean medical student, tested positive for Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome on September 9, initially baffling the government after the World Health Organization declared the world's SARS outbreak over in July. A panel of 11 experts from Singapore, the WHO and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that the man had caught SARS at an Environmental Health Institute lab where research on the virus is done and where the man had studied the West Nile virus. Genome sequencing on the lab's strain of SARS coronavirus matched a sample from the researcher, the panel said in a 31-page report released by Singapore's health ministry on Tuesday. It said bio-safety standards were below those necessary for handling infectious diseases such as SARS, which killed more than 800 people worldwide this year, including 33 in Singapore. [View Article](#)

## South Korea: Pathogen Associated with Conjunctivitis Outbreak

18 September – ProMed reported as of August [2003], [adenovirus](#) type 8 and adenovirus type 37 had been isolated by cell culture. They were typed by sequencing and real-time polymerase chain reaction (PCR) in the hexon gene region. Adenovirus type 4, which is known to cause pharyngoconjunctivitis, was also isolated. But since then, no adenoviruses have been isolated, though [enteroviruses](#) have been found, which coincided with the clinical diagnosis by doctors. [View Report](#)

## US Seeks Thai Help on Germ Research

8 September – The Nation reported the United States seems to have turned to Thailand for assistance in its fight against biological weapons. Thai scientists have been asked to collaborate with their American peers to research the deadly bacterium *Burkholderia pseudomallei*, which has the potential to be developed as a biological weapon. US scientists recently sought advice from Sirirung Songsivilai, professor of molecular biology at Mahidol University - a move he puts down to the US push to eliminate bio-chemicals from theatres of war. He said that after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon two years ago, the US Department of Homeland Security listed the bacterium as among the top 10 agents most likely to be used in the creation of biological weapon. [View Article](#)

## Vietnam: Dengue Fever Update

22 September – ProMed reported As of 14 Sep 2003, as many as 2,948 people in Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh City were infected with [Dengue Fever](#), up 71.8 percent against the whole year of 2002. The 2 main reasons are that the city is rainy and hot, and many locals store rainwater in containers for domestic use, which create favorable conditions for the development of mosquitoes. Most of Vietnamese dengue fever patients live in the south of the country. As of mid July [2003], over 12,000 people in the region were reported to have been infected with the disease, a year-on-year increase of 164.6 percent. [View Report](#)

## Water in India's Uttar Pradesh Contaminated by Carcinogens

15 September – UN Wire reported an estimated 116 million people in Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state, lack access to safe drinking water and are consuming groundwater contaminated by arsenic, cadmium, fluoride, nitrates, and lead, according to a government report. According to the state's Water Works Department, water from more than half of the 20,000 hand pumps tested revealed traces of carcinogenic compounds. One of them, arsenic, can cause cancers and skin diseases even in low concentrations. Prolonged exposure can cause kidney, liver, intestinal, neurological, cardiovascular and respiratory disorders. Experts say groundwater contamination is due

to improper disposal of industrial and municipal waste as well as percolating pesticides and insecticides. [View Article](#)

## USSOUTHCOM

### UN Launches Hepatitis B Vaccine Campaign in Peru

24 September – VOA reported the United Nations has launched a vaccination campaign aimed at saving two Peruvian tribes threatened with extinction by [hepatitis B](#). The United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF, made the announcement Tuesday, saying in a statement that the Candoshi and Sharpas tribes could face extinction within 10-12 years if preventive action, especially among children, is not taken. The United Nations says the Candoshis suffered 145 cases of hepatitis B two years ago and that last year, 40 deaths were reported. There was no data on the Sharpas. Both groups have a population of about 3,000 people. UNICEF says its goal is to vaccinate all the tribes' 150 babies three times before they reach the age of one to try to eliminate the disease, which can cause liver failure. The two ethnic groups live along the Pastaza and Morona rivers in a remote area of the Amazon basin. UNICEF says travel from the region to the nearest health center can take four days. [View Article](#)

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/>.

POC: Rachel Gross, PhD  
[Rachel.Gross@APG.amedd.army.mil](mailto:Rachel.Gross@APG.amedd.army.mil)

Lorraine Bell, DrPH, MSN  
[Lorraine.Bell@APG.amedd.army.mil](mailto:Lorraine.Bell@APG.amedd.army.mil)

Approved:

[Kevin Delaney](#)

Chief, Health Information Operations

(410) 436-5217 or DSN 584-5217