

**USACHPPM**  
**DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF FOR OPERATIONS**  
**HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS**  
**WEEKLY UPDATE**

**29 October 2001**

**RECENT ISSUES**

1. **INHALATIONAL ANTHRAX – USA.** The CDC has confirmed eight cases of inhalational anthrax associated with bioterrorism. Seven of the eight cases were in postal or mailroom workers. Three individuals are deceased of which two were postal workers from the Brentwood postal facility and the index case was from American Media, Inc. (AMI). Mr. Ernest Blanco, AMI mailroom employee, was released from the hospital on 23 October. Three postal workers in the DC metro area are under medical care: two workers are from the Brentwood Facility and one worker is from a mail facility for the State Department in Sterling, Virginia. A postal worker in New Jersey has also been confirmed with inhalational anthrax while two other postal workers have suspected but unconfirmed anthrax. Also, the New York Medical Examiner is reevaluating the death of a postal worker on 10 October. The CDC mandated a change in reporting anthrax cases this week. Cases are now reported based on the presence of symptoms rather than a diagnosis of anthrax. This is believed to have resulted in a 48-hour earlier notification of anthrax in a postal worker from the Brentwood Facility.

2. **CUTANEOUS ANTHRAX – USA.** The cumulative number of confirmed cutaneous anthrax cases associated with bioterrorism in the US is six after a New Jersey postal worker tested positive on biopsy and serologic testing.

3. **ANTHRAX EXPOSURES – USA.** Nationwide, approximately 10,000 individuals have been tested for anthrax exposure and approximately 15,000 are on prophylaxis.

- On Sunday, 28 October, the CDC switched recommendations on antibiotic prophylaxis from ciprofloxacin to doxycycline citing fewer side effects and demonstrated sensitivity on lab tests.
- On Friday, 26 October the CDC announced new recommendations for vaccination in “high risk” laboratory workers and decontamination crewmembers. The CDC is reviewing a consideration for the vaccine in postal workers. The vaccine is not expected to be available for two weeks pending coordinative efforts between the vaccine manufacturer and DoD. The media will likely be interested in an assessment of how this will affect DoD’s vaccination program.
- On Wednesday, 24 October the CDC released guidance for protecting mail handlers from anthrax exposure, which includes a hierarchical order of engineering controls, housekeeping measures, and personal protective equipment (PPE). PPE recommendations are based on the individual facility risk assessment and *may* include respirators, gloves, goggles, and disposable aprons. <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/DocumentsApp/Anthrax/10272001AM/han48.asp>
- The DOE’s Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque, NM developed the antisporecidal foam that is being used for anthrax decontamination. This product has broad application for environmental use in patient decontamination teams.
- USPS awarded Titan Corporation of San Diego a \$40 million contract to provide eight electron beam systems to irradiate mail. Titan will subcontract with a subsidiary SureBeam to

provide these systems. The Titan Corporation will operate and maintain the systems. The contract also includes an option to expand the order to 12 additional systems. The DC metro area was cited as a priority with the first machines expected to arrive in November. Additional equipment is under consideration for biological detection purposes. In the interim the USPS are prepared to issue masks and gloves for its 800,000 employees.

**4. AGROTERRORISM – USA.** Agroterrorism was the topic of the Sixth Annual Emergency Preparedness Satellite Seminar hosted by USDA, FEMA, and DoD. A number of potential agents were discussed with foci on anthrax, foot and mouth disease, bovine spongiform encephalopathy, and West Nile virus. On Thursday, 25 October, the Secretary of Agriculture announced that by the end of this fiscal year the USDA will have increased inspection personnel at ports of entry by 40 percent and doubled the inspection dog teams from two years prior. The Secretary also relayed that President Bush had requested an additional \$45 million to strengthen biosecurity measures.

**5. SMALLPOX VACCINATION GUIDANCE – WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO).** On Friday, 26 October, the WHO announced updated guidance on smallpox vaccination. The WHO continues to recommend the vaccine for those with suspected exposure to smallpox or a related virus, but that emphasizes that the vaccination of entire populations “is not recommended.” The guidance was based on a risk of severe reactions to the vaccination, which can include death, and the ability of the vaccination to prevent smallpox after a known exposure to the virus. WHO is focusing efforts on the ability to expand vaccine production and increase stocks in the event of an outbreak and the amount and quality of the current vaccine stocks. The NIH is recruiting volunteers for a study to look at comparing undiluted vaccine with 5:1 and 10:1 dilutions. This study will help determine if the existing 15.4 million doses of smallpox vaccine can be expanded to 75-150 million doses. Results are expected in February 2002. Ten companies have submitted proposals to DHHS after a solicitation for 250 million doses of vaccine. WHO advocates the best method of control for a smallpox outbreak is search and containment – identification of cases and vaccination of contacts. The WHO also stated that individuals who have received smallpox vaccination historically would be unlikely to develop the more serious effects of the disease. The WHO has added a fact sheet and a smallpox Q&A information sheet to its main homepage this week.

[\[http://www.who.int/emc/diseases/smallpox/factsheet.html\]](http://www.who.int/emc/diseases/smallpox/factsheet.html)

[\[http://www.who.int/emc/diseases/smallpox/faqs\\_smallpox.html\]](http://www.who.int/emc/diseases/smallpox/faqs_smallpox.html)

**6. FAMINE – AFGHANISTAN.** The Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN’s Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture released a special report on famine threats for Afghanistan and neighboring countries on Thursday, 25 October. Three consecutive years of drought coupled with civil strife is now posing a threat of “massive starvation.” The dislocation of millions of people during the wheat-planting season is likely to affect consumption needs well into 2002. The neighboring countries of Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are also significantly impacted by the drought.

<http://www.fao.org/giews/english/alertes/2001/SRAFGCen.htm>.

**7. REFUGEES – AFGHANISTAN.** The Taliban expanded a controversial refugee camp near the Pakistan border, which contains a medical unit to care for wounded. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) expressed concern that this camp may be used to

recruit militia for the Taliban. The UNHCR also released this weekend that 15 camps capable of holding up to 150,000 people were ready to begin operations in Pakistan. Islamabad continues to maintain a closed border saying the country cannot afford another influx of Afghans. The country currently has nearly three million long-term Afghan refugees. The UNHCR also believes many thousands of internally displaced Afghans are massed along the northern borders with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. One camp in Tajikistan has 2,000 Afghan refugees with many displaying signs of malnutrition. Refugee conditions will likely deteriorate further as emergency aid from Uzbekistan is not likely for another one to two weeks.

**8. INFLUENZA SURVEILLANCE – NORTHERN HEMISPHERE.** The National Flu Surveillance Network reports the New York is under an influenza alert. This is primarily due to activity in Queens and Nassau Counties. Eight states are now under an influenza watch: California, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin. The three newly added states are due to influenza activity in Lake County just north of Chicago, Charlotte, North Carolina, and Knoxville, Tennessee.

**9. DENGUE FEVER – HAWAII.** Cumulative, confirmed cases leveled off somewhat at 69 as of 28 October with six new cases in Maui and four in Oahu. Two suspect cases and 292 reports of illness remain under investigation. Thus far all cases have been somewhat mild with none requiring hospitalization. State public health officials caution that vigilance is necessary as volunteers are recruited to go into communities to advise residents about cleaning up potential mosquito breeding areas.

**10. BOVINE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHY (BSE)/POTENTIAL VARIANT CREUTZFELD-JAKOB DISEASE (vCJD) – FDA.** The FDA's Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies Advisory Committee voted 18 to 1 on Friday to recommend a ban on the sale of *any* product containing cow brain or spinal tissue, whether made abroad or in the US. This decision was based on the theoretical risk of eating BSE-infected beef. This comes in light of a report released on Friday, 26 October by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, which predicts the total number cases of vCJD, will not exceed 40,000, and will probably be restricted to between 900 and 12,000. The analysis was conducted using an epidemiological model that was used to chart the spread of HIV, which has proved to be highly accurate. The model predicts that less than 20 new cases are expected annually through 2005. This compared to 28 in 2000 and 16 as of 30 September. The number of new cases predicted by the model would be in single digits by 2020. The report further stated that as many as 350,000 may be infected, but given the long incubation period, the vast majority would die of other causes before showing any symptoms.

**11. BOVINE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHY (BSE)/POTENTIAL VARIANT CREUTZFELD-JAKOB DISEASE (vCJD) – JAPAN.** As of Friday, 26 October the Organisation [sic] for Pharmaceutical Safety and Research reports that Japanese manufacturers have voluntarily recalled 397 substances used in more than 1,000 medical and cosmetic products. Over 160 companies were affected. The recall was in response to the government's announcement on 5 October that products made from cow placenta and other substances using beef by-products were potentially dangerous. This was in response to Japan's first confirmed

case of BSE in a dairy cow and a suspect case of vCJD in a teenage girl. Ministry officials expect confirmatory tests results to take as much as three months.

**12. WEST NILE VIRUS (WNV) – LOUISIANA AND TENNESSEE.** The first human case of WNV in Louisiana was confirmed on Monday, 22 October in a homeless man living in Kenner. The man was initially admitted to a hospital on 29 September with severe neurological symptoms. This brings the cumulative total cases to 38 for calendar year 2001. The first positive horse was also diagnosed in Tennessee on Thursday, 25 October. Horses are believed to be a dead-end host due to the extremely short and transient viremia. WNV will likely be transmitted year round in the more temperate Southern states. The Center for Integration of Natural Disaster Information in concert with the USGS, USDA, and CDC has developed the WNV Surveillance System. This system tracks the geographic (to the county level) and temporal spread of WNV using a GIS system for birds, humans, veterinary data (pets, livestock, and wildlife), mosquitoes, and sentinel animals.

[http://cindi.usgs.gov/hazard/event/west\\_nile/west\\_nile.html](http://cindi.usgs.gov/hazard/event/west_nile/west_nile.html)

**13. HIV VACCINE DEVELOPMENT – LONDON, ENGLAND.** Health experts from around the world meet on 29 October in London to review the latest developments in vaccine development. A vaccine for use in widespread trials is expected in three years. AIDSVAX is in Phase III, a second vaccine is in Phase II, and others are in earlier stages of development. AIDSVAX is made from gp120, a portion of the viral outer surface protein. It works by introducing a harmless portion of the protein into the body; the hepatitis B vaccine uses a similar approach. The vaccine in Phase II works via a harmless canarypox virus that is genetically engineered to contain HIV proteins, which stimulate HIV-specific immune responses. The International Aids Vaccines Initiative asserts that logistical issues to deal with vaccine production and delivery are “woefully inadequate” and may push widespread use of the vaccine another five years into the future.

**14. TB VACCINE DEVELOPMENT – OXFORD, ENGLAND.** The first new TB vaccine in 80 years began a six-year clinical trial on Monday, 22 October. The John Radcliffe Hospital is recruiting volunteers to be given the vaccine known as MVA85A. The new vaccine is to be used with BCG, the existing TB vaccine first introduced in 1921. BCG provides protection for approximately 10 years. Oxford was selected because routine BCG vaccinations for children stopped in 1981 when the incidence of TB was in decline.

## **NEW PRODUCTS**

### **What YOU Should Know About Anthrax trifold**

#### **Anthrax Awareness wallet card**

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