

USACHPPM
HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE

20 February 2004

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 TOPICS	2
Breastfed Baby Exposed to Smallpox Vaccine Virus	2
Clogged Arteries Can Cause Mental Decline	2
New, non-radioactive Screen for Anti-malarial Compounds	2
Physical Fitness May Protect Aging Brain	3
Prognosis: Index for Heart Risk Shows Merit	3
Report Links Breast Cancer to Antibiotic Use	3
Single Chickenpox Shot May not be Enough	4
Strong Rx for Blood Ailment	4
Wrist Traction Device Relieves Carpal Tunnel Pain.....	4
FOCUS ON EPIDEMIOLOGY	5
Secondary and Tertiary Transfer of Vaccinia Virus Among U.S. Military Personnel --- United States and Worldwide, 2002--2004	5
Department of Defense Global Emerging Infections System Report.....	5
Influenza Update	6
DoD Global Influenza and Other Respiratory Viral Pathogens Surveillance Weekly Update Week 6 (8 Feb – 14 Feb).....	6
USEUCOM	7
Democratic Republic of Congo: Measles Epidemic in Equateur Province.....	7
Epidemic of Sleeping Sickness Feared in Angola	8
Nigeria: Lassa Fever Outbreak Reported in Edo State.....	8
Recent Outbreaks of Cholera in Africa	8
Research in Italy Turns up a New Form of Mad Cow Disease	9
Russia (Novosibirsk) - Opisthorchiasis.....	9
Uganda Launches Campaign against Obstetric Fistula.....	9
U.N. Says Spread of AIDS in Former Soviet Union Has Reached Crisis Proportions	10
Zimbabwe (Masvingo) - Anthrax, human & livestock	10
USCENTCOM	10
Chaos and War Leave Iraq's Hospitals in Ruins.....	10
USNORTHCOM	11
Hawaii Sees Many Leptospirosis Cases	11
Hi-tech Vest Could Cool Heat of Battle	11
USA: Suspected Norovirus Outbreak at Philadelphia Hotel.....	11
U.S. Infant Mortality Rises	11
USPACOM	12
Australia: Dengue Fever Update	12
Dengue Spreads in Trincomalee Town, Sri Lanka	12

Dengue Fever Hits 6 Areas in Singapore.....	12
Dengue Death Toll Hits 166 in Indonesia.....	12
West Jakarta Wary of Chikungunya Epidemic.....	13
USSOUTHCOM	13
Guatemala: 50 Deaths in Outbreak of Rotavirus Infection.....	13
Honduras: Dengue Fever Update.....	13

HOT TOPICS

Breastfed Baby Exposed to Smallpox Vaccine Virus

12 February - ProMed reported breastfeeding women who live with someone who has been recently vaccinated against [smallpox](#) should take extra precautions to prevent their infants from being exposed to the virus used in the vaccine, according to a new report published in JAMA. Doctors at the Madigan Army Medical Center in Tacoma, Washington, have documented the case of a breastfed infant, who was exposed to vaccinia virus, which is used as the smallpox vaccine. The baby's mother had not been vaccinated against smallpox but her husband, a soldier, was given the vaccine soon before the baby developed symptoms. About 10 days after the husband was inoculated, his wife developed blisters on her nipples. Shortly after, a blister was seen on the baby's upper lip. Testing showed that vaccinia virus was the cause of the lesions for both the mother and the child. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) already recommends that women who are breastfeeding should not receive the smallpox vaccine, but there are no guidelines against vaccination of other people living in the same household. Transfer of the vaccinia virus within a household remains "extremely rare," according to Dr Mary P Fairchok, but she said this case demonstrates the need for extra precautions in households where a child is breastfeeding. [View Report](#)

Clogged Arteries Can Cause Mental Decline

16 February – Health Day News reported elderly people whose [arteries that feed blood to the brain are blocked](#) face a higher risk not only of stroke, but an inability to think clearly, a new study says. The research team looked at 4,006 men and women aged 65 and older who were included in the Cardiovascular Health Study. None of these people had had a stroke or a transient ischemic attack (TIA). The researchers used ultrasound to determine the condition of each patient's left carotid artery. They also had the subjects take a test, called the Modified Mini-Mental State Examination, which evaluated their cognitive status. The test was repeated annually for up to five years. The team found that when compared to people with normal carotid arteries, the 32 volunteers who had a severely narrowed neck vessel had significant cognitive decline. [View Article](#)

New, non-radioactive Screen for Anti-malarial Compounds

16 February—Eurekalert reported Panama's International Cooperative Biodiversity Group (ICBG) announces the development of a new test for identification of anti-malarial compounds with wide applicability in the developing world. The assay for plant-derived compounds also can be used to detect anti-plasmodial compounds from synthetic or natural sources. Initial results of the research are published in the American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene under the title "A Novel DNA-Based Microfluorometric Method to Evaluate Anti-malarial Drug Activity". The assay is based on fluorochrome binding to parasite double stranded DNA. Pico Green, a powerful fluorochrome developed by Invitrogen Corporation's Molecular Probes business enables detection of the [malaria](#) parasite in cell culture without the need for radioactive materials used in current methods. The new

assay will be attractive in developing countries where access and disposal of radioactive tracers is prohibitively expensive as well as in the many developed-world labs that prefer non-radioactive reagents. [View Article](#)

Physical Fitness May Protect Aging Brain

16 February – Reuters reported being physically fit may be good for the aging brain, researchers report. In a new study of older adults, higher levels of physical fitness were associated with improved mental abilities. Two sets of experiments involving older adults were performed. In the first study, 41 people who had no signs of dementia underwent an exercise test to evaluate their physical fitness. They also measured brain activity while participants performed a task that required them to pay close attention. Older adults who had a high level of physical fitness performed better on the activity. What's more, people who were in better shape demonstrated much more activity in parts of the brain that are believed to be involved in attention. In the second study, participants were randomly assigned to one of two exercise groups. One group participated in stretching and toning activities several days a week, while the other group focused on aerobic activity, such as walking. At the end of the 6-month program, older adults in the aerobic group improved their cardiovascular health. This improvement in heart health corresponded with a significant improvement on the attention activity. In addition, they experienced an increase in brain activity in areas related to attention. In contrast, there were no significant changes in people in the stretching and toning group. [View Article](#)

Prognosis: Index for Heart Risk Shows Merit

17 February – The New York Times reported identifying patients with [metabolic syndrome](#) — a relatively new term for a cluster of health problems — is far more effective than looking at weight alone as a way of predicting heart attack risks, a study released yesterday says. Patients are considered to have metabolic syndrome if they have three or more of these problems: obesity centered around the waist; high blood pressure; low levels of the good cholesterol; difficulty metabolizing blood sugar; and high levels of triglycerides, which are related to cholesterol. The study, which is being published in *Circulation*, a journal of the American Heart Association, drew on data collected from 780 women who entered the study with suspected heart disease. Over four years, those classified as having metabolic syndrome were twice as likely to die or have heart attacks as those who were obese but did not meet the syndrome's criteria. A second study published in the same journal yesterday that drew on the same pool of patients found that among those women in whom heart disease was diagnosed at the start of the study, those with metabolic syndrome were almost five times as likely to have heart attacks as those who did not. The studies were led by researchers at the University of Pittsburgh. [View Article](#)

Report Links Breast Cancer to Antibiotic Use

17 February – Reuters reported women exposed to higher amounts of antibiotics have as much as twice the risk of [breast cancer](#), but it is not known if the treatment is an actual cause of the most common form of cancer afflicting women worldwide, researchers said on Tuesday. The study from the University of Washington in Seattle was based on a look at 10,219 women in a group health plan, some of whom were being treated for breast cancer. Antibiotic use of the patients studied was determined by the prescription records maintained by the health plan. It found that women who took antibiotics for more than 500 days, or had more than 25 prescriptions, over an average period of 17 years had more than twice the risk of breast cancer as women who had not taken any antibiotics. The risk was smaller for women who took antibiotics for fewer days. But even women who had between one and 25 prescriptions over an average of 17 years were about one and a half times more likely to be diagnosed with breast cancer than women who didn't take any antibiotics. Though more research is needed to determine if antibiotics are a cause of the cancer, the researchers offered some possible theories on

how they could be. One is that antibiotics can affect bacteria in the intestine, perhaps impacting how certain foods that might otherwise prevent cancer are broken down in the body. Another involves the effects of antibiotics on the body's immune response and response to inflammation, which could also be related to the development of cancer. It is also possible that underlying medical problems that led to antibiotic use are a factor, the report said. [View Report](#)

Single Chickenpox Shot May not be Enough

18 February – The Chicago Sun Times reported the [chickenpox](#) vaccine loses effectiveness over time, raising the possibility kids will need a booster shot, researchers reported Tuesday. The vaccine was 97 percent effective one year after the shot and 84 percent effective at eight years, according to the study in the Journal of the American Medical Association. Other vaccines also lose immunity, so the finding wasn't surprising. Moreover, most vaccinated kids who do get sick have "very mild" cases, said lead author Dr. Marietta Vazquez of Yale University. The chickenpox shot is recommended for children 12 months to 18 months old. The study found that kids immunized after 15 months were less likely to experience waning immunity. [View Report](#)

Strong Rx for Blood Ailment

17 February – Newsday reported an international group of doctors is pushing for aggressive treatment to prevent half a million deaths worldwide from a common bloodstream infection. [Sepsis](#) kills more than 200,000 people annually in the United States alone - more deaths than from lung and breast cancer combined. Later this month, a coalition of leading critical care specialists will urge doctors, governments and health agencies worldwide to adopt the first-ever sepsis treatment guidelines. Their plan calls for fast use of powerful antibiotics and other aggressive action. The number of sepsis cases has increased dramatically since the 1980s, while death rates have remained stubbornly high, underscoring the need for rapid recognition and treatment, Dr. Margaret Parker, a guidelines author, said. "The goal of this whole project is to decrease the mortality of sepsis worldwide," said Parker, incoming president of the suburban Chicago-based Society of Critical Care Medicine, which represents more than 11,000 specialists. Sepsis is estimated to affect 18 million people worldwide each year and kill 1,400 people each day. In the United States alone, 750,000 people yearly develop sepsis and about 30 percent of them die. [View Article](#)

Wrist Traction Device Relieves Carpal Tunnel Pain

13 February – Reuters reported a new device that temporarily places the wrist in "traction" holds promise as a treatment for the painful carpal tunnel syndrome, researchers report. [Carpal tunnel syndrome](#) occurs when one of the nerves that pass through the wrist becomes compressed. Symptoms included numbness, weakness, tingling and pain in the fingers and hand. The device applies traction forces to relieve pressure on the median nerve by acting on the joints and soft tissues in the wrist. During the first 4 weeks of the study, participants wore the device for 10 minutes twice a day. For the next 4 weeks, they wore it once a day. No other treatments for carpal tunnel syndrome were allowed during the study. Most of the people in the study reported symptom relief within two weeks. One of the first symptoms to improve was waking up during the night, followed by a lessening of numbness and tingling. At the end of the study, results of a test of nerve function that is used to diagnose carpal tunnel syndrome were normal in 50 percent of participants and near normal in another 33 percent. [View Article](#)

Focus on Epidemiology

Secondary and Tertiary Transfer of Vaccinia Virus Among U.S. Military Personnel --- United States and Worldwide, 2002--2004

13 February - The CDC reported In December 2002, the Department of Defense (DoD) began vaccinating military personnel against [Smallpox](#) as part of the pre-event vaccination program. Because vaccinia virus is present on the skin at the site of vaccination, it can spread to other parts of the body or to contacts of vaccinees. To prevent autoinoculation and contact transfer, DoD gave vaccinees printed information that focused on hand washing, covering the vaccination site, and limiting contact with infants. This report describes cases of contact transfer of vaccinia virus among vaccinated military personnel since December 2002; findings indicate that contact transfer of vaccinia virus is rare. Continued efforts are needed to educate vaccinees about the importance of proper vaccination-site care in preventing contact transmission, especially in household settings. [View Report](#)

Department of Defense Global Emerging Infections System Report

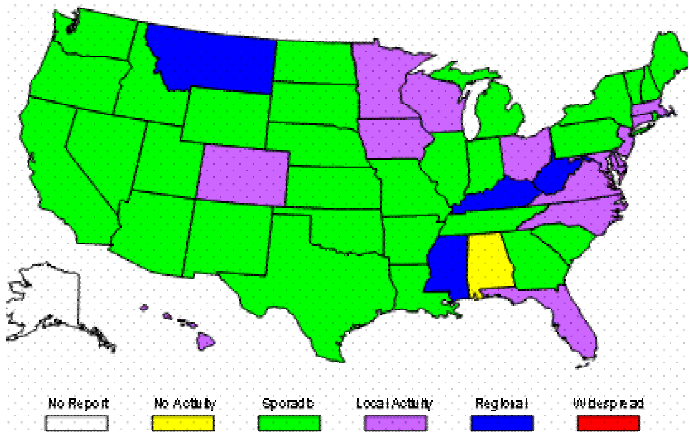
18 February - The FDA's Vaccine and Related Biologics Advisory Committee (VRBAC) meets in Bethesda, MD, on February 18-19 to select the antigens for the 2004-2005 influenza vaccine. US and worldwide surveillance data, vaccine effectiveness information from the 2003-2004 season and specific virus isolate data of interest will be presented. The laboratory-based, DoD Global Influenza Surveillance Program located at Brooks-City Base, San Antonio, Texas, conducts surveillance with support and guidance from DoD-GEIS. The Air Force Institute for Operational Health (AFIOH) is the DoD Executive Agency for the influenza program. Through AFIOH and GEIS, DoD provides a critical component of the WHO/CDC global network to detect respiratory disease, identify emerging influenza viruses and capture candidate viruses for possible inclusion in the next year's vaccine. Isolates from the DoD Global Influenza Surveillance Program, obtained from clinical and sentinel surveillance sites across DoD and from DoD's overseas laboratories, are routinely shared with the CDC and WHO. DoD's surveillance program contributed an isolate previously chosen as a vaccine component strain. A/Panama, used for the past three seasons' vaccine and for nearly 300 million doses in the US, came from a DoD facility in Panama and was isolated by AFIOH and sent to the CDC/WHO. Each year there are presentations of national and international data, including DoD's global influenza report by AFIOH. The 2003-2004 season has been remarkable for the dominant circulating strain A/Fujian (H3N2) that is not well covered by this year's vaccine, for the early onset of the influenza season in the US and for widespread avian influenza A/H5N1 in Asia with the accompanying concern about potential genetic exchange with human influenza. CDC and VRBAC requested AFIOH to also present: DoD's experience with 2003-2004 vaccine effectiveness, surveillance of vaccine breakthroughs (i.e., influenza isolations from vaccinated people) and outbreak-related studies in DoD. OASD(HA) is a voting member on the VRBAC. Vaccine effectiveness studies are the result of collaborations among CHPPM, NHRC, AFIOH, DoD-GEIS and the CDC. For more information on DoD influenza surveillance efforts, please see the DoD-GEIS website [<http://www.geis.ha.osd.mil>]. VRBAC information is available through the FDA website [<http://www.fda.gov/cber/advisory/vrbp/vrbpmain.htm>]. US national influenza surveillance (and links to related WHO sites) is available through CDC [<http://www.cdc.gov/flu>].

Influenza Update

CDC Update

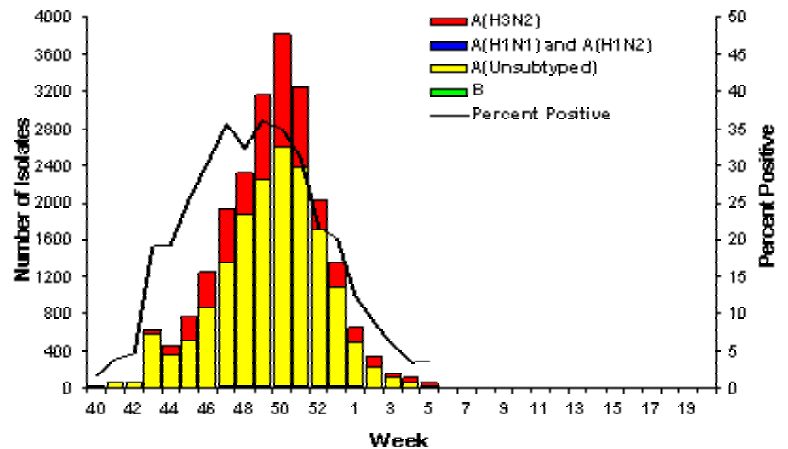
Weekly Influenza Activity Estimates Reported by State & Territorial Epidemiologists

Week ending February 7, 2004 - Week 5



[View Source](#)

WHO/NREVSS Collaborating Laboratories National Summary, 2003-04



WHO Update

18 February 2004- WHO reported, to date, Thailand has reported nine cases of human H5N1 infection. Of these, seven were fatal. Viet Nam has reported 22 cases of human H5N1 infection. Of these, 15 were fatal. Highly pathogenic avian influenza, caused by the H5N1 strain, is currently infecting poultry in 8 Asian countries. Full control has not yet been achieved in any of these countries, despite intensive efforts in many. In China, outbreaks of H5N1 infection in poultry, first reported on 27 January, have continued to spread. To date, authorities have reported 52 outbreaks at poultry farms, of which 43 have been confirmed as caused by H5N1. Altogether, 16 of the country's 31 provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities have been affected. Xizang (Tibet) Autonomous Region and Jilin Province are the most recently affected areas. In Japan, authorities have confirmed a small outbreak in Oita Prefecture as caused by the H5 subtype. Further testing is under way to confirm the possible involvement of the H5N1 strain. In Korea, on 7 February, authorities reported new outbreaks at 8 duck farms, 7 chicken farms, and one mixed farm with chickens and ducks. Around 350,000 birds died or were destroyed in the most recent outbreaks. Authorities in Thailand have reported 14 new outbreaks in various provinces, including one province where the disease had not been reported previously. More than 27 million birds have either died or been destroyed. Infections in chickens, ducks, geese, turkeys, ostriches, quail, and peacocks have been reported. In Viet Nam, outbreaks have been detected in 57 of the country's 64 provinces affected. More than 27 million birds have either died or been destroyed. Information on the status of poultry outbreaks in Cambodia, Indonesia and Laos is still being gathered. [View Source](#)

DoD Global Influenza and Other Respiratory Viral Pathogens Surveillance Weekly Update Week 6 (8 Feb – 14 Feb)

14 February - Since the start of the influenza surveillance season (Week 40: 28 Sep to 4 Oct 03), the Epidemiological Surveillance Division (AFIOH/SDE) has received 2,692 throat swab specimens as part of the influenza surveillance program. 2,604 (96%) of the specimens have been processed to date. Of those processed, 913 (36%) were positive for Influenza A virus and 5 were positive for Influenza B virus. [View Source](#)

Other Sources

12 February – CBS reported a strain of bird flu has been found at four live chicken markets in northern New Jersey, just days after outbreaks at two farms in Delaware led to the destruction of thousands of birds. New Jersey health officials stressed that the findings are not unusual for the state's live poultry markets and said the strain is not known to be harmful to humans. Nancy Halpern, the state veterinarian, said the markets likely got the virus from one of the many farms and distributors who supply them. New Jersey has about 35 live chicken markets across the state. Markets found to be infected are instructed to sell off all birds, and then clean and sanitize all cages and equipment before reopening. Officials said the strain found in New Jersey is the same one found at two farms in Delaware since last week. The strain is not related to the virulent variety of avian influenza that is blamed for the deaths of at least 19 people in Vietnam and Thailand. [View Article](#)

13 February – Yahoo News reported Agriculture Secretary Dennis C Wolff announced that a Mount Joy, Lancaster County, poultry flock, previously identified as having avian influenza, has a strain of influenza, H2N2, that poses a low threat to the general population and to the poultry industry. "Late this afternoon, we received notification of the strain from USDA's National Veterinary Services Laboratory in Ames, Iowa," said Wolff. "This is not the strain currently in Asia or Delaware. We believe this indicates no threat to human health and a low threat to the poultry industry. [View Article](#)

16 February – Reuters reported Asia's rampaging bird flu has killed a rare leopard in Thailand, making the leap into exotic animals after killing at least 20 people and afflicting millions of chickens, Thai officials said. Tests confirmed the clouded leopard kept in a zoo near Bangkok had died of the same virulent H5N1 avian virus that has hit eight Asian countries. It is thought that the Leopard ate infected chickens. The leopard died on January 27 at Kaokiew Zoo, 60 km (40 miles) east of Bangkok, several days after suffering from respiratory problems. A tiger at the zoo was recovering from the same deadly virus, Prapat said. Health experts say it could be the first case of avian influenza appearing in such exotic animals. [View Article](#)

16 February – Reuters reported Thailand's hopes of following Japan in declaring a swift end to its huge bird flu crisis were dashed as the virus which has killed 20 Asians reappeared in eight areas where it had been thought vanquished. Japan planned to declare an end to its sole outbreak this week if no new cases were reported, officials said, and Thailand had hoped to follow suit by the end of this month despite warnings from U.N. health experts that it was being premature. But Deputy Agriculture Minister Newin Chidchop told reporters the H5N1 virus had been found in fighting cocks in areas of eight provinces where mass slaughters were carried out and in ducks in one not struck by the first wave of infections. "We have found 14 spots in nine provinces," he said. The infected fighting cocks -- valuable birds some owners were accused of hiding -- were found in former "red zones" where the government had ordered the slaughter of poultry within a five km (three-mile) radius of an outbreak, he said. [View Article](#)

USEUCOM

Democratic Republic of Congo: Measles Epidemic in Equateur Province

15 February – ProMed reported up to 300 cases of [measles](#) have been reported in Basankusu, 210 km north east of Mbandaka, the main town in the Democratic Republic of Congo province of Equateur. However, doctors in Basankusu told the UN Mission in the DRC that some 800 people were infected, 3 of whom had died. National health workers have been on strike for one week now, and it is difficult to

determine the exact figures for the sick. The cause of this epidemic is also unknown but doctors at Basankusu suspect it has been caused by the poor refrigeration of vaccines. However, the World Health Organization (WHO), the epidemiological services at the Ministry of Health and vaccination experts say the cause could lie elsewhere. "The greater likelihood for the disease is that vaccination coverage against measles has been poor in many of these health zones." He said that the epidemic had resurfaced in all areas where fewer than 80 per cent of residents had been vaccinated.. [View Report](#)

Epidemic of Sleeping Sickness Feared in Angola

12 February – IRIN New reported with hundreds of thousands of people in Angola on the move in peacetime, there is a serious risk that they will take the parasite that causes [Trypanosomiasis \(African Sleeping Sickness\)](#) with them into areas where uninfected tsetse flies may bite them, become infected and pass on the disease, sparking an epidemic that Angola, struggling to rebuild its war-shattered infrastructure, can ill afford. MSF and the national Institute to Combat and Control Trypanosomiasis (ICCT) believe that 14 of Angola's 18 provinces are threatened by the tsetse fly, which infects both humans and animals. Although limited surveys have been carried out in only seven provinces, they believe that as many as 4.3 million people, a third of Angola's population, could be at risk. [View Article](#)

Nigeria: Lassa Fever Outbreak Reported in Edo State

14 February – ProMed reported an outbreak of [Lassa fever](#) has been reported in Nigeria's midwestern state of Edo. Reports said 2 patients had been confirmed dead at the Specialist Teaching Hospital in Irrua, Edo state while several others were suspected to have died without going to hospital for treatment. The epidemic is said to have affected the northern part of the state, including Ekpoma, Igarra and Ibilo. The disease, with symptoms at onset including fever, headache, vomiting, sore throat, nausea, cough and diarrhea is transmitted to humans by wild rodents. In severe cases of Lassa fever, which occurs mostly in West and Central Africa, hemorrhage, seizures and swelling of neck and face are frequent. The main methods of control are isolation of cases, disinfection, surveillance of contacts and rodent control. [View Report](#)

Recent Outbreaks of Cholera in Africa

18 February - The WHO reported on a number of [Cholera](#) Outbreaks in Africa. Since the beginning of December 2003 there have been several clusters of cholera cases in Burundi. As of 10 February 2004, the Ministry of Health has reported a total of 236 cases including 6 deaths in the provinces of Bubamza, Bujumbura, Bururi and Citiboke. A WHO team is investigating the outbreak. As cholera transmission in the outbreak is closely linked to the lack of a safe water supply, a specific intervention for the chlorination of drinking water has been implemented. The Ministry of Health has reported a cholera outbreak in Cameroon centered around Douala with 514 cases and 13 deaths (case fatality rate, 2.5%). WHO, UNICEF and Médecins sans Frontières are supporting local health authorities in outbreak control. A cholera outbreak continues to affect Mali. From the beginning of 2004, a total of 280 new cases with 33 deaths (case fatality rate, 11.78%) have been reported in the regions of Mopti, Segou and Timbuctou. The control of the outbreak is very difficult due to the spread of several clusters of cases throughout the country (i.e. 13 municipalities affected from 26 January to 1 February 2004). WHO, with financial support from the Humanitarian Aid Office of the European Commission, is providing medical supplies and specific technical assistance to control the outbreak. The Ministry of Health of Mozambique has reported a total of 9,391 cases and 61 deaths from 20 December 2003 to 16 February 2004 in 6 provinces (Gaza, Inhambane, Maputo, Nampula, Sofala, Zambézia). Maputo city is the most affected with 6,124 cases and 32 deaths. With the absence of heavy rainfall last week, the average number of cholera cases has decreased. The Department of Health of South Africa has reported a cholera outbreak in the Nkomazi area, Mpumalanga province, which borders Mozambique.

As of 11 February 2004, the cumulative number of cholera cases reached 179 with 5 deaths (case fatality rate, 1.7%). In Zambia, the cholera outbreak is still ongoing, mainly in Lusaka city. As of 9 February 2004, the Ministry of Health has reported a total of 3,835 cases and 179 deaths (case fatality rate, 4.66 %). Médecins sans Frontières-Spain is supporting case management through cholera treatment centers. WHO is providing medical supplies and supporting local health staff. In addition, a WHO mission comprising an epidemiologist and a water and sanitation engineer is currently assessing the situation and proposing additional control measures. [View Report](#)

Research in Italy Turns up a New Form of Mad Cow Disease

17 February – The New York Times reported a new form of [mad cow disease](#) has been found in Italy, according to a study, and scientists believe that it may be the cause of some cases of human brain-wasting disease. While the strain has been found in only two Italian cows, both apparently healthy, scientists in Europe and the United States said it should provide new impetus in Washington for the Department of Agriculture to adopt the more sensitive rapid tests used in Europe because it may not show up in those used in the United States. Along with the Italian study, there have been recent reports of unusual types of mad cow disease in France and Japan, and scientists say the discovery of new forms suggests that many cases of "sporadic" human disease — by far the most common kind, responsible for about 300 deaths a year in the United States — are not spontaneous at all, but come from eating animals. [View Article](#)

Russia (Novosibirsk) - Opisthorchiasis

13 February – ProMed reported [Opisthorchiasis](#) has been found in the Obskoye Sea (Novosibirsk oblast, Russia). It was long believed that fish from this Novosibirsk reservoir are free from *Opisthorchis* because of the reservoir's hydrologic regime. However, an investigation by the Clinical and Experimental Veterinary Institute, specialists in animal ecology, has found otherwise. According to preliminary data presented by Konstantin Fedorov, doctor of biological sciences, 13 per cent of the reservoir's bream are affected by opisthorchiasis, along with 70 to 80 per cent of dace, 15 per cent of roach, and 75 per cent of ide [dace, roach, and ide are types of European freshwater cyprinid fish]. The main source of opisthorchiasis is the lower stream of the Ob River, in the Hanti-Mantiyskiy region. Novosibirsk itself is now becoming a source of opisthorchiasis, however, because of its sewage disposal system -- the cities of Kamenka, Elzovka, and Tula are all dumping their contaminated sewage into the Ob River. [View Report](#)

Uganda Launches Campaign against Obstetric Fistula

13 February – The UN News Centre reported Uganda's First Lady launched a drive to end the most devastating of all pregnancy-related disabilities - a move hailed and backed by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Through the campaign, 12 regional hospitals will receive much-needed equipment and supplies for to deal with ["fistula,"](#) a preventable condition caused by prolonged and obstructed labor, coupled with a lack of appropriate medical intervention - typically a Caesarean section - to relieve it. Victims suffer chronic incontinence and in nearly all cases the baby dies, according to UNFPA. The Uganda campaign, launched in Kampala by Janet Museveni, involves training local doctors in surgery and post-operative care and conducting awareness-raising activities about the problem. [View Article](#)

U.N. Says Spread of AIDS in Former Soviet Union Has Reached Crisis Proportions

17 February – The Washington Post reported the United Nations warned that the spread of [AIDS](#) through the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe has reached crisis proportions and beseeched complacent regional leaders "to wake up [and] take this threat seriously" before it overwhelms them. While the epidemic largely spared the region as it ravaged other areas in the 1980s and 1990s, AIDS is now spreading faster here than anywhere in the world. One of every 100 adults in Russia and several other countries now has the virus that causes AIDS, a higher rate than anywhere but sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean, the U.N. reported. [View Article](#)

Zimbabwe (Masvingo) - Anthrax, human & livestock

16 February – Promed reported 3 more cases of [anthrax](#) have been reported at Morgenster in Masvingo district, taking the cumulative total of anthrax cases in humans to 283 in the province. Masvingo district is the latest casualty of anthrax, which has wreaked havoc in Gutu, Chivi, and Bikita districts since September 2003. Acting provincial medical director for Masvingo Mr Edwin Sithole said they had tightened their surveillance on the movement of beef in the affected areas and were working with the Veterinary Department and the Civil Protection Unit to curb the spread of anthrax. He said most people were contracting the disease after eating beef from infected cattle, and he encouraged them to have their beef inspected first before consuming. [View Report](#)

USCENTCOM

Chaos and War Leave Iraq's Hospitals in Ruins

13 February — The New York Times reported at Baghdad's Central Teaching Hospital for Children, gallons of raw sewage wash across the floors. The drinking water is contaminated. According to doctors, 80 percent of patients leave with infections they did not have when they arrived. Doctors say they have been beaten up in the emergency room. Blood is in such short supply that physicians often donate their own to patients lying in front of them. "The word `big' is not enough to express the disaster we are facing," said Ahmed A. Muhammad, the hospital's assistant manager. To be sure, Iraq's hospitals were in bleak shape before the American-led invasion last year. International isolation and the sanctions imposed after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 had already shattered a public health care system that was once the jewel of the Middle East. Crucial machines stopped working. Drugs were in short supply. Conditions eased a bit once the United Nations oil-for-food program started in 1996, but the country still suffered, especially the children. But Iraqi doctors say the war has pushed them closer to disaster. Fighting and sabotage have destroyed crucial infrastructure and the fall of Saddam Hussein precipitated a breakdown in social order. Doctors also said that the postwar sabotage of the country's primary pharmaceutical factory in Samarra and the looting of the central supply depot in Baghdad had depleted the country of needed supplies. [View Article](#)

USNORTHCOM

Hawaii Sees Many Leptospirosis Cases

11 February – The Honolulu Advertiser reported Hawaii recorded nearly 500 cases of [leptospirosis](#) in the past decade and six of those people died of the bacterial disease, an illness suspected in the death of a Big Island college student last month. Dr. Paul Effler, Hawaii's state epidemiologist, said people need to be aware of the danger of the bacteria in freshwater ponds, streams and catchment water and be careful to report unexplained fevers or illnesses that develop after such exposure to their doctors. A state Health Department report on leptospirosis exposure from 1993 to 2002 indicates 28 cases developed after contact with the Waipi'o River, more than any single source in the survey. Other locations associated with multiple cases of the disease include: on O'ahu, Maunawili Stream/Falls, Kapena Falls/Nu'uuanu Stream and Kahana Stream; and on Kaua'i, Waimea River, Wailua River and the Hanalei River. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that half of the nation's annual 100 to 200 recorded cases of leptospirosis occur in Hawaii. [View Article](#)

Hi-tech Vest Could Cool Heat of Battle

17 February – New Scientist reported a new, lightweight cooling vest, using ammonia and powered by hydrocarbon fuel, could soon be helping US soldiers cope with the heat of battle. Troops wearing biological and chemical protection suits, or other forms of protective clothing, can very quickly succumb to heat exhaustion if working in a warm environment. And if the weather is very hot, even personnel in ordinary clothing can be severely limited in their capabilities. Some wearable cooling systems already exist and are used by astronauts, for example. But these are based on pumping cooled water through the vest's tubes. This requires substantial power, making these systems too heavy to be carried. Now, funded by the US Army, engineers at the Department of Energy's Pacific Northwest National Laboratory and Oregon State University are developing a cooling vest that promises to be just a tenth of the weight. [View Article](#)

USA: Suspected Norovirus Outbreak at Philadelphia Hotel

12 February – ProMed reported health officials are investigating an outbreak of illnesses at a Philadelphia hotel that recently played host to about 200 Republican leaders, including President George W Bush. At least 69 guests at the Loews Philadelphia Hotel -- all attending a business conference -- went to the hospital last week when an undiagnosed presumptive infectious agent caused dizziness and vomiting. More fell ill, but did not seek medical attention. In addition, 2 people at a Republican retreat to discuss party policy became ill the day after checking out. Philadelphia Health Department spokesman Jeff Moran said investigators are looking at several possible causes for the outbreak, including food contamination and [norovirus](#) infection, an illness that has been known to afflict travelers on cruise ships. Most of the sicknesses did not occur until several days after the Republicans left. Moran said there was nothing to indicate the outbreak was linked to the Republican gathering, and no foul play was suspected. [View Report](#)

U.S. Infant Mortality Rises

12 February – CBS News reported U.S. infant mortality has climbed for the first time in more than four decades, in part because older women are putting off motherhood and then having multiple babies via fertility drugs, the government said. At the same time, U.S. life expectancy reached an all-time high of 77.4 years in 2002, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Wednesday. Life expectancy

in 2001 was 77.2 years. The nation's infant mortality rate climbed from 6.8 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2001 to 7.0 deaths per 1,000 in 2002. The last time the rate rose was in 1958. [View Article](#)

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Australia: Dengue Fever Update

17 February – ProMed reported hundreds of people across north Queensland and the Torres Strait have contracted [Dengue Fever](#) in recent months. 200 people have been infected in the latest outbreak on Thursday Island, and now, for the first time in 100 years, the 1st death has been reported from the fever's complications. But of greatest concern to health authorities are 3 cases of the potentially fatal dengue hemorrhagic fever. [View Report](#)

Dengue Spreads in Trincomalee Town, Sri Lanka

17 February – ProMed reported the North East Provincial health department Friday launched an Emergency awareness campaign in Trincomalee to educate the residents of the eastern port town against the spread of [Dengue Fever](#), after medical officials detected 11 suspected positive cases in recent days, sources said. One death had taken place in the heart of Trincomalee town, said a health official. Health officials sought the assistance of students in a house-to-house campaign to educate the residents to keep their houses and premises clean and to destroy all discarded coconut shells, tires, empty tins and bottles, which are considered breeding grounds for mosquitoes. [View Report](#)

Dengue Fever Hits 6 Areas in Singapore

17 February – ProMed reported 6 areas in Singapore have been identified to have [Dengue Fever](#). Each area has had 2 or more cases within 150 meters, occurring within a 2-week period. On Saturday, the National Environment Agency (NEA) came up with a plan to bolster its 700-strong Dengue Prevention Volunteer Group. By the end of 2005, 2000 primary school children will have been trained by the NEA to identify mosquito breeding areas. Called Mozzie Busters, the youngsters will help keep an eye out for stagnant water in their homes and neighborhoods. The 6 clusters with outbreaks of dengue fever are Cornwall Gardens and the Holland area, Marine Terrace and Marine Crescent, Hougang Avenues 8 and 10, Simei Street 3, Thomson Ridge and Sawngage Road, in the Tanjong Katong area. [View Report](#)

Dengue Death Toll Hits 166 in Indonesia

19 February – The Jakarta Post reported the death toll in the dengue fever outbreak has reached 166 from the at least 8,135 people infected nationwide, as health authorities are struggling to identify the virus responsible for the rapid spread of the disease. Director General of Communicable Diseases Umar Fahmi said a government surveillance team had been conducting serotype tests to determine the cause of the outbreak, which would enable the government to find proper measures to contain the disease. "The team is studying the possible existence of a new strain of the dengue fever virus, which is different from the ones responsible for the outbreak last year," Fahmi said. The tests are being conducted at the Health Laboratory Center (BLK) in four major cities in Indonesia: Jakarta, Palembang, Surabaya and Makassar, and in university laboratories countrywide. Dengue and dengue hemorrhagic fever (DHF) are caused by one of four closely related, but antigenically distinct, virus serotypes -- DEN-1, DEN-2, DEN-3, and DEN-4 -- of the genus Flavivirus. Infection with one of these serotypes does not provide cross-protective immunity. Doctors treating patients in several provinces across the country

believe a new, more virulent subvariant virus sparked this year's outbreak. The head of arbovirology at the Ministry of Health, Rita Kusriastuti, said the possibility was there but it would take a long time to prove the suspicion. [View Article](#)

West Jakarta Wary of Chikungunya Epidemic

13 February – The Jakarta Post reported concern is growing among West Jakarta health workers as the number of suspected cases of [Chikungunya](#) disease over the last month nears 50 in Keagungan subdistrict, Taman Sari. Although many have recovered after treatment and no fatalities have been reported, workers and residents are still worried as new cases of the disease are still emerging. Several Taman Sari health workers were fumigating residents' homes and along trash-clogged sewers for mosquitoes. Residents suspect that flooding caused by water spillage from a nearby construction site and the clearing of formerly lush shrubs and trees there had contributed to the rise in the number of mosquitoes. [View Article](#)

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Guatemala: 50 Deaths in Outbreak of Rotavirus Infection

17 February - ProMed reported the number of children dead as a result of [rotavirus](#) infection rose to 50 as the health authorities continued to struggle to contain the outbreak, which began in January 2004. Physicians have treated nearly 35,870 cases of children with the symptoms of rotavirus infection. Of that number, Leon said, 6,500 cases have tested positive for rotavirus. According to the Health Ministry, the rotavirus outbreak has spread to 17 of the country's 22 provinces, and the measures promoted by authorities have been unable to stem the illness. [View Report](#)

Honduras: Dengue Fever Update

17 February – ProMed reported in 2003 health authorities reported 7,397 cases of [Dengue Fever](#) & 111 of Dengue Hemorrhagic Fever (DHF). So far in 2004, there have been 3 more deaths. In El Progreso, in the Sula valley, Jose Lino Chong, chief of Health Area 2, said there were 2 deaths from DHF there in 2003, and 25 cases of dengue were seen there in January 2004, some of them suspected of being DHF. In 2001 there was no dengue in the area, in 2002 there was one case, but from Sep-Dec 2003 there were 1741 cases, including 16 with laboratory confirmation of DHF, one of them fatal. [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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