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HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE

09 April 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.

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HOT TOPICS

Breathalyser Could Detect Cancer

05 April – BBC News reported a device that can sniff out early signs of lung [cancer](#) in a person's breath is in development. The cancer "breathalyser" works using technology originally designed for oil prospecting. It uses lasers to detect tiny traces of ethane in the breath, and is so sensitive it can spot concentrations of less than one part per billion. The University of Glasgow project aims to detect lung cancer from ethane released by cells breaking down. Early detection and monitoring of cancer hugely improves the effectiveness of treatment and the possibility of cure. [View Article](#)

Dutch Study Shows Famine Raises Breast Cancer Risk

08 April – Reuters reported that women who lived through the 1944-45 Dutch famine caused by a German blockade during World War Two have a 48 percent higher risk of breast cancer. The Utrecht University study, published in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute on Wednesday, showed women whose food intake was unaffected had a lesser breast cancer risk. The researchers also found that among the women studied, those who never had children had a higher risk of breast cancer than those who had given birth. They suggested hormone systems in those exposed to famine, particularly children between the ages of two and nine, might change so as to render them unable to adequately respond to much higher food intake later in life, possibly raising cancer risk. Researchers said previous studies on rats had shown long-term reduction in food intake could prevent various kinds of cancer, including breast cancer. But there was little data on the link between short-term food restriction in animals and cancer risk. Studies on the impact of food restriction on humans have been limited by ethical and practical considerations, but the Dutch researchers examined the link using breast cancer screening data from Dutch women who lived through the wartime famine.

[View Article](#)

Embryonic Stem Cells Develop into Bone Marrow and Blood Cells

31 March – Eurekalert reports that researchers at Northwestern University have devised a method to induce embryonic stem cells to develop into bone marrow and blood cells. Injecting the stem cells into the bone marrow cavity of mice whose bone marrow cells had been depleted restored production of blood cells, including cells of the immune system, which normally are created in the bone marrow. The method was effective even in genetically mismatched mice. If the same results can be produced in humans, the technique may eventually eliminate the need to find genetically matched human bone marrow donors for persons with leukemia, autoimmune diseases and other immune disorders. Although the use of human embryonic stem cell lines is controversial, it has many advantages over the use of donor bone marrow or blood cells, which are highly variable, cannot be cultured in a laboratory, may cause lethal graft-versus-host disease and are often not available to patients due to inability to find a suitably matched donor. [View Article](#)

Experimental SARS Vaccine Shows Promise

01 April - The Associated Press reported that scientists say mice immunized with an experimental [SARS](#) vaccine were protected against the deadly respiratory disease that killed nearly 800 people worldwide a year ago. Results show the vaccine prompted an immune response in the mice and dramatically reduced the level of the virus in the lungs of some mice. The SARS vaccine was made from a small piece of genetic material from the virus called a plasmid. It biochemically locks onto a specific protein on the outer surface of the virus. This alerts the body's immune system to launch a counterattack against the invading virus. [View Article](#)

Mapping of Rat Genome Gives Researchers Tool to Fight Human Diseases

01 April - The Associated Press and Reuters reported the genetic code of the rat joined the growing list of creatures whose DNA has been mapped and experts said it will make the laboratory rat, already beloved by scientists, an even better tool for fighting human disease. The rat is only the third species to be sequenced to such a degree, after the completed human-genome sequence in April 2003 and the draft mouse genome in December 2002. It confirms that the laboratory rat is, in fact, a good choice for medical research. The researchers chose the brown Norway strain of laboratory rat, known scientifically as *Rattus norvegicus*. Having the genetic sequences of two closely related mammals will arm scientists with more genetic information than either would alone, when comparing with humans. [View Article](#)

Mayo Clinic Researchers Discover Green Tea Helps Kill Leukemia Cells

31 March – Eurekalert reports that Mayo Clinic researchers have discovered that a component in green tea helps kill cells of the most common leukemia in the United States. The research using laboratory cell cultures shows a component of green tea known as epigallocatechin-3-gallate (EGCG) helps kill leukemia cells by interrupting the communication signals they need to survive. The leukemia cells studied were from patients with B-cell chronic lymphocytic leukemia (CLL) -- most often diagnosed in patients in their mid-to-late 60s. Currently, there is no cure for CLL, though chemotherapy is administered in the most severe cases. The Mayo Clinic study shows that green tea's EGCG interrupted survival signals, prompting leukemia cells to die in eight of 10 patient samples tested in the laboratory. [View Article](#)

Newer Drugs More Effective at Curing Strep Throat than Penicillin

05 April - Eurekalert reported pediatricians treating a child who has strep throat should reconsider the role of penicillin given that a newer class of antibiotics, cephalosporins, are three times more effective. The findings will spark widespread debate, because they contradict long-established guidelines from the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Heart Association, and World Health Organization. The new study presents findings from a meta-analysis, a review of 35 previous studies done about the efficacy of cephalosporin drugs and penicillin in treating strep throat. The findings indicate that the newer class of drugs has a more impressive bacterial cure rate. [View Source](#)

Novel MRI Technique Provides Clear Images of Blood Flow

04 April 2004 – Nature Medicine reported that Duke University Medical Center researchers have created for the first time moving images of blood traveling through vessels, non-invasively and without the use of contrast agents or radiation. They used a novel application of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) technology. Just as importantly, the researchers said, this technology can easily be applied to

existing MRI machines, since the advances reported by the Duke team do not involve new hardware, but are rather the result of new conceptualization of the technology. MRI uses harmless magnetic fields and radio-frequency signals to image tissues in the body. Basically, the magnetic fields cause hydrogen nuclei, or protons, that are part of water molecules in tissue to align. Pulses of radio frequency waves perturb this alignment, and the molecules give off telltale signals as they lose energy. The signature of such water molecules differs according to the tissue, providing the contrast that is a key to MRI's ability to sensitively image tissues. The new approach, called global coherent free precession, allows researchers to selectively "tag" protons within the water of blood cells with radio frequency waves as they pass through the plane of the MRI scan. Since all other tissues surrounding the blood do not pass through the scanner's plane, they are not tagged, leaving images solely of the blood as it moves downstream through the vessel. [View Article](#)

Public Smoking Bans May Cut Heart Attacks

04 April – Eurekalert reported that smoke-free laws may be linked with a rapid fall in the number of heart attacks. Previous studies have shown that people living or working in an environment polluted with secondhand smoke have a 30% increased risk of heart attack. The study took place in Helena, a small community in Montana that imposed a law banning smoking in public and in workplaces from June to November 2002. The law was overturned by opponents in December 2002. The number of monthly admissions to the local hospital for heart attack for people living in and outside Helena was recorded for the same six months of each year from 1998 to 2003. During the six months that the law was in effect, the number of admissions fell by about 40% among people living in Helena, from an average of 40 during the same months in the years before and after the law, to a total of 24 during the ban. There was no significant drop in admissions for people living outside Helena. This is the first study to report such an association and, like any initial report, further research is desirable to confirm the finding, say the authors. However, the fact that admission rates fell in the area where the law was implemented but not outside the area suggests that smoke-free laws not only protect people from the long term dangers of secondhand smoke, but that they may also be associated with a rapid decrease in heart attacks. [View Source](#)

Rabies Vaccine Recalled

07 April – CBS News reported a common [rabies](#) vaccine for humans is being recalled in the United States and 23 other countries after a live strain of the virus was found in some other samples made at the same time. Testing of Aventis Pasteur's IMOVAX vaccine uncovered the presence of a live Pittman-Moore strain of the rabies virus. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said the drug "should not contain live virus." While the tested lot of the vaccine was never distributed for public use, Aventis recalled four other lots in the United States because they were made during the same time as the faulty lot. The CDC said those lots had all passed quality tests. The CDC said it was unlikely that anyone who received rabies shots from the recalled lots could have been exposed to the live form of the virus, but "a theoretical possibility exists." As a result, the CDC has recommended that people who have taken recalled rabies shots receive additional shots of the vaccine that have not been recalled. It warns people not to delay receiving rabies shots because of the recall. The recalled lots, X0667-2, X0667-3, W1419-2 and W1419-3, were distributed between Sept. 23 and Friday, company officials said in a news release. [View Article](#)

Scientists Detail Hormone's Role in the Impulse to Eat

02 April – The Washington Post reported two research teams describe newfound powers of leptin, the mysterious hormone that helps govern hunger and satiety. It appears that the substance, produced by fat cells, plays a crucial role in establishing the brain's circuitry before birth, and retains the ability to

subtly rewire those neural connections throughout life. Those observations, made in mice but which scientists believe may also apply to humans, offer a peek at the cellular workings of the drive to eat. The papers also shed light on why many people seem to have a physical "set point" -- a weight their body seeks to maintain despite their efforts to change it. When it is released by fat cells into the bloodstream, leptin works to suppress appetite. A deficiency of the hormone leads to overeating and obesity. However, hopes for easily losing weight by simply taking leptin have not been borne out by human experiments. The new research helps explain why -- namely, that leptin works in a delicately calibrated system whose workings may be established at least in part even before birth. [View Article](#) (registration required)

Sun May Increase Chance of Papilloma Virus

05 April - Yahoo News reported that the long sunny days of summer may increase the risk of catching a common sexually transmitted infection. Researchers using data from Holland found that detection of [papilloma](#) virus infection during routine cancer screening peaks during August. Their theory: Sunlight suppresses women's immune system defenses. Experts have long suspected that sunlight has powerful — and perhaps conflicting — effects on the body's tendency to develop a variety of diseases, including cancer. The best example is the risk of too much sun triggering skin cancer. However, many suspect sunshine can have less obvious influences, and can even affect susceptibility to a variety of everyday viruses like papilloma. These viruses are spread through sexual contact, and they are the most common cause of cervical cancer, a disease that kills about 4,000 U.S. women annually. Although the virus can cause genital warts, most infected people have no outward symptoms. Dr. William Hrushesky, of the WJB Dorn Veterans Administration Medical Center in Columbia, S.C., found that the sunnier the year and the sunnier the month, the higher the rate of human papilloma virus. August is consistently the sunniest month in southern Holland, and the screening tests picked up twice as much evidence of papilloma virus infection then as in the winter. The virus fell off sharply in September. Sexual intercourse did not appear to explain most of the variance. Hrushesky theorizes that even though women are exposed to papilloma at roughly the same level year round, the extra sunlight weakens their defenses against it in the summer.

[View Source](#)

Therapeutic Forgetting for Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome

04 April – The New York Times reported on scientists who work with patients who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. They are defending and developing a new science that can be called therapeutic forgetting. True post-traumatic stress can be intractable and does not tend to respond to most therapies. Researchers at Harvard Medical School directed a study in which half of the subjects were taking an inert placebo pill and half were taking propranolol, which interferes with the action of stress hormones in the brain. When subjects were read scripts of their traumas, 43 percent of the placebo group responded with increased physiological measures of stress. In the propranolol group, no one did. When subjects were asked whether they believed that memories of their trauma were impairing their daily lives, there was no significant difference between the propranolol and the placebo groups. Findings suggest that the drug could eventually offer relief to people disabled by memories of battle. [View Article](#) (registration required)

Viagra Could Reduce Men's Fertility

04 April – New Scientist reported taking Viagra could reduce men's fertility, suggest the results of a new study. The anti-impotence drug not only speeds sperm up, researchers found, but it also caused the vital reaction needed to penetrate an egg to occur prematurely. "Viagra was introduced in 1998 and since then it has been prescribed to over 16 million men," says David Glenn, one of the team that

conducted the test tube experiments at Queen's University in Belfast, Northern Ireland. "Most use it for impotence and aren't contemplating having a family, so this has no implications for them," he says. However, younger men are using it recreationally, and they may be trying to start a family. Furthermore, an audit of fertility clinics by the team revealed that 42 per cent use Viagra to help men produce sperm samples on demand. Glenn stresses the work is preliminary but if confirmed, would-be fathers and fertility clinics would need to re-examine their use of Viagra. [View Article](#)

Focus on Epidemiology

Work-Related Roadway Crashes --- United States, 1992-2002

2 April – MMWR reported that the risk for roadway crashes associated with driving or riding in a motor vehicle at work affects millions of people in the United States. In 2001, approximately 4.2 million U.S. workers were classified as motor-vehicle operators. Workers who use motor vehicles to perform their jobs include those who operate vehicles owned or leased by their employers and those who drive personal vehicles for work purposes. To characterize fatal occupational roadway crashes and identify workers at highest risk for fatality, CDC analyzed data for 1992-2002 from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI) of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The results of that analysis indicated that roadway crashes were the leading cause of occupational fatalities and that workers in transportation-related occupations were at highest risk. Effective strategies to prevent motor-vehicle-related crashes in the general public also can reduce work-related crashes. During 1992--2001, a total of 13,337 civilians died in work-related roadway crashes in the United States. Rates remained stable during the decade, averaging approximately one fatality per 100,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) workers. Of these fatalities, 89% were males, whose fatality rate was six times that of females. Rates increased markedly beginning at age 55 years. Forty-nine percent of the fatal work-related roadway crashes involved collisions of vehicles, followed by single-vehicle incidents that did not involve a collision with another vehicle or with a pedestrian (e.g., rollovers) (26%), and collisions between a vehicle and a stationary object (18%). The vehicles most commonly occupied by fatally injured workers were semi-trucks (28%), cars (24%), other and unspecified trucks (18%), and pickup trucks (12%). During 1992--2001, the annual number of deaths of pickup truck occupants increased 96%, and deaths of semi-truck occupants increased 49%. Deaths of car occupants decreased 33%.

[View Source](#)

DoD-GEIS: Avian Influenza

06 April - The first human case of avian influenza A (H7) in British Columbia (BC), Canada, occurred in a person involved in culling infected poultry from 13-14 March. Exposure is likely to have occurred through eye trauma. On 16 March, he reported conjunctivitis and nasal discharge. He was treated with oseltamivir beginning on 18 March and symptoms have fully resolved. Health Canada determined this case was caused by AI A(H7) and informed WHO. A second BC case occurred 25 March involving a worker in close contact with infected birds; he had conjunctivitis also. He was treated with oseltamivir on 25 March and symptoms resolved. Approximately 10 other poultry workers exhibited conjunctival and/or upper respiratory symptoms after having contact with poultry. Use of personal protective equipment is mandatory for all persons involved in culling activities, and compliance with prescribed safety measures is being monitored in Canada. Epidemiologic, laboratory and clinical evaluations are ongoing. WHO raised the global pandemic preparedness level from 0.1 to

0.2 on April 5 for the Canadian outbreak. Global pandemic preparedness levels are dictated by the epidemiological situation for each local event. Level 0.2 means that more than one human case caused by a new subtype of influenza virus has been identified in the local event. In Asia, 34 reported human illnesses and 23 deaths have been reported due to AI A(H5N1). The existing global preparedness level of 0.2 for the AI in Asia remains unchanged. No human-to-human transmission of AI has been reported during these outbreaks and investigation continues. WHO reports that Canada has taken all required actions in response to the current AI A (H7) outbreak in British Columbia.

[WHO AI Information](#); [CDC Information](#). For information on hot topics such as Influenza (avian and human), Leishmaniasis, West Nile Virus and severe respiratory syndromes, including SARS – see the [DoD-GEIS website](#).

USEUCOM

Democratic Republic of Congo: Outbreaks of Measles and Rabies

07 April - ProMED reported that more than 14 people have died in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) as outbreaks of [measles](#) and [rabies](#) ravage Orientale province in the north east of this vast country, officials said. A measles epidemic in the town of Basoko has infected 828 people, claiming 9 lives, while in Isiro some 30 people have contracted rabies, and 5 of them have died. The DRC government is planning to send emergency health teams to the two areas and has called for UN health agencies to provide "urgent help to bring these epidemics under control... and help locals." In 2003, the Democratic Republic of Congo emerged from a five-year war that claimed some 2.5 million lives either directly in combat or through disease and hunger. [View Source](#)

Keetmanshoop Battles Twin Scourges

06 April – AllAfrica.com reported the co-infection of [tuberculosis](#) (TB) and [HIV/AIDS](#) is causing havoc in the town of Keetmanshoop in southern Namibia. Health officials fear that it will be difficult to control the situation if people continue to stigmatize the two diseases. The diseases are the major causes of death people in the area face. Principal medical officer at the Keetmanshoop Hospital, Dr Emmanuel Dumebi Adigwe, said the issue was complicated by the dropout rate of those on TB treatment and the stigma that HIV-infected people face. Statistics available from national TB campaigners indicate that the disease has not only become one of the two major causes of death but is responsible for a significant number of institutional deaths. When Namibia applied for funding from the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and malaria, it indicated that 10 percent of all deaths in Namibia were due to TB. Between 1991 and 2000, the rate of notification has risen from 430 for every 100,000 to 619 / 100,000 a year. Drug resistance has increased because some patients fail to follow prescribed schedules when taking their medicine. Adigwe said defaulters were the most costly patients to treat and were spreading multi-drug resistant strains. [View Article](#)

HIV Infects One in Four Young South African Women

07 April – Reuters reported nearly one in four South African women aged between 20 and 24 is infected with the AIDS virus, but broad HIV infection rates among youth appear to be stabilizing, a national survey said. The study by researchers at the University of the Witwatersrand said women bear the brunt of the country's raging AIDS epidemic -- which infects an estimated five million of South Africa's 45 million people, the highest caseload in the world. "Among the 10 percent of South African youth who are HIV positive, 77 percent are women," the researchers said. "Nearly one in four women

aged 20-24 are HIV positive compared to one in 14 men of the same age." The overall HIV prevalence rate of about 10 percent for South Africans aged between 15 and 24 is broadly in line with other estimates conducted of the national population, and data reflected earlier suggestions that new HIV infection rates are leveling off, chief investigator Professor Helen Rees said. [View Article](#)

USCENTCOM

Update: Cutaneous Leishmaniasis in U.S. Military Personnel – 2002-2004

02 April – MMWR reported data on cutaneous [leishmaniasis](#) (CL), a sand fly-borne parasitic infection, in military personnel deployed to Afghanistan, Iraq, and Kuwait. During August 2002--February 2004, Department of Defense (DoD) staff identified 522 confirmed cases of CL in military personnel. This update focuses on the 361 cases (69% of 522) in patients whose demographic data were collected systematically under treatment protocols for therapy with the pentavalent antimonial compound sodium stibogluconate (Pentostam[®]) at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, District of Columbia. Of the 361 patients with CL, 98% were male. The median age was 25 years. On the basis of the patients' deployment histories, all but four of the patients probably were infected in Iraq. The patients represented multiple branches of the U.S. military but the majority of the patients were in the Active Force component of the Army. Self-reported dates of onset of skin lesions ranged from May 2002 to January 2004, with 78% occurring during August--November 2003, including 48% during September-October. DoD is implementing measures to decrease the risk for CL among U.S. military personnel in Southwest/Central Asia and to expedite detection and treatment of cases of CL. The measures include 1) improving living conditions for deployed personnel; 2) heightening awareness that leishmaniasis is endemic in this region 3) emphasizing the importance of deployed personnel using personal protective measures, and 4) enhancing vector-control activities. [View Article](#)

Whooping Cough Outbreak Kills Children in Helmand Province

02 April – The Asia-Pacific Daily Report states that the United Nations Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) is reporting that health officials in the Afghan capital Kabul have confirmed an outbreak of pertussis ([whooping cough](#)), in the country's southern Helmand province. According to reports, at least four children have died of the disease in the border district of Garmser and some 400 are reportedly infected with the contagious bacterial disease. Whooping cough, which starts with cold-like symptoms, is spread through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks. The disease is generally treated with antibiotics. Vaccination against the disease, which mainly affects children, is included in the DPT and DTaP vaccines. [View Article](#)

USNORTHCOM

About 900,000 U.S. Children Neglected, Abused

01 April – Reuters reported nearly 900,000 U.S. children were neglected or abused in 2002 and 1,400 died as a result, the U.S. Health and Human Services Department reported. Although there has been an improvement in the situation over the previous decade, HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson said in a statement, "The abuse of children remains a national tragedy that demands our commitment and action." Surgeon General Dr. Richard Carmona announced he would create a working group to focus attention on the problem and find ways to tackle it. Statistics gathered by the National Child Abuse

and Neglect Data System showed child protective service agencies received 2.6 million reports of possible maltreatment in 2002. Of these, 896,000 were substantiated and most involved neglect. HHS said the rate of child neglect and abuse in 2002 was about 20 percent lower than the rate in 1993, when maltreatment peaked at an estimated 15.3 out of every 1,000 children. The rate is now 12.3 out of every 1,000 children. The full report, [Child Maltreatment 2002](#), is posted on the Internet.

Adults Still Skip Condom Use

06 April – CNN reported Americans claim to be savvy about sexually transmitted diseases, but knowing a few facts is not keeping them from taking many risks, according to a national survey. The majority -- 84 percent -- of the survey respondents said they take necessary steps to prevent catching an STD, but 82 percent of the sexually active participants said they never use barrier protection when having oral sex. Almost half said they go without condoms when having vaginal sex. The American Social Health Association queried 1,155 adults between the ages of 18 and 35 for the survey. The effort was part of an educational initiative for April, which is Sexually Transmitted Diseases Awareness month. Statistics indicate that one out of four Americans will contract a STD during their lifetime, but the more than two-thirds of survey participants expressed little concern about getting sexually transmitted diseases. [View Article](#)

AIDS Fears Grow for Black Women

05 April - The New York Times reported that a black woman in the United States is 23 times more likely to be infected with AIDS than the white woman and black women accounted for 71.8 per cent of new HIV cases in women from 1999 to 2002, a government study of 29 states has indicated. Though the number of new cases of HIV among black women has been stable in past few years, the number of those who have been infected through heterosexual sex has risen, the study said. In 2001, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation, a non-profit group focusing on health issues, an estimated 67 percent of black women with AIDS contracted the virus through heterosexual sex, compared with 58 percent four years earlier. Black women accounted for half of all HIV infections acquired through heterosexual sex, in men or women, from 1999 to 2002, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said. Researchers said that though heterosexual transmission has risen for all women, a black woman has a greater chance of coming into contact with the virus when she has sex with another black person because, compared with the general population, there is a higher rate of HIV among black Americans. Recent studies suggest that 30 percent of all black bisexual men may be infected with HIV, and up to 90 percent of those men do not know they are infected. [View Source](#) (registration required)

Condom Label Changes Spark Debate

02 April – Yahoo News reported the tiny bit of print on a condom packet is at the center of a raging debate now that President George W. Bush has asked the Food and Drug Administration to modify the current warning to include information about human papillomavirus, commonly called HPV or genital warts. On one side are scientists who believe that condoms should be promoted as a crucial line of defense against several STDs and cervical cancer. On the other are groups that advocate waiting for sex until marriage, and who see the dangers of HPV as an argument for their cause.

[View Article](#)

Staph Outbreak at Palm Beach County Jail Spreads

02 April – The Palm Beach Post reported the county health department has documented 339 cases of the staph infection at the Palm Beach County Jail since September. The health department told jail officials to culture all inmate wounds in December. Shortly thereafter, the health department declared an outbreak of staph, which usually manifests itself as open or closed pustules on the skin. The bacteria can be passed by touching, on clothing or on shared surfaces, such as a bathroom floor. MRSA is resistant to most antibiotics. Prison Health Services and the sheriff's office said they have taken the staph outbreak seriously. They have isolated infected inmates in one unit - about 30 this week - and have checked the temperatures of clothes dryers. [View Article](#)

West Nile Virus Could Hit California Hard

05 April – Yahoo News reports that California is likely to experience many more cases of [West Nile virus](#) this year. Entomologist John D. Edman, director of the University of California's Center for Vectorborne Diseases expects West Nile to erupt in Southern California this summer and spread to northern areas of the state. Edman notes that, despite efforts at control, there's a large mosquito population in California. The first in-state West Nile virus infections of humans in California were confirmed last year. Those three cases were in the Los Angeles area. The Tehachapis Mountains form a natural barrier between Southern California and the rest of the state. Migrating crows and other birds will likely carry the virus over that range, Edman says. [View Source](#)

USPACOM

Australian 'Mud Football' Game Sickens Players

31 March – Eurekalert reports that more than one-quarter of the participants in a "mud football" competition in Western Australia suffered from infections by *Aeromonas hydrophila*, a type of bacterium often found in water and soil. The mud for the football game had been prepared by plowing an unused field and pumping water onto it from the nearby Collie River, which was fairly stagnant due to lack of rain. (Mud produced by rainfall does not pose the same health risk as prepared mud.) Participants not only played in the mud, but most also took baths in the river afterwards. Cuts and scrapes from gravel and field stubble became infected with *A. hydrophila*, causing pus-filled lesions to develop at the wound sites. Several players also experienced headaches, fever, rashes, muscle soreness, nausea and a feeling of general illness. *A. hydrophila* is resistant to penicillin and other commonly used antibiotics. Playing areas should be as free as possible from material that could scratch participants and the water used to make the mud should be treated or taken from flowing rivers. Researchers also advised putting water on the field shortly before the event so that bacteria would have less time to grow, and suggested that disinfectants and showers with warm, treated water be available for players' use. [View Article](#)

Online Report of Epidemic Situation of Infectious Disease Realized

02 April – The Peoples Daily reported China has abandoned its old reporting procedure for epidemic situations, i.e., reporting by administrative organs level by level on a monthly basis beginning April 1. Instead, the medical institutions will report epidemic situations online directly. After three months' trial operation and improvement, the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention's online reporting system has been adopted by all disease control organs over county level and medical institutions. Of the 27 types of infectious diseases which are requested to be reported by law, pestis, cholera,

poliomyelitis, diphtheria, dengue fever and SARS were not reported. The top five diseases reported are: TB, hepatitis B, diarrhea, gonorrhea, and hepatitis A. The occurrence rate of report failure, or incomplete report has dropped from 16.4 percent in January to the current 2.8 percent. [View Article](#)

Singapore Scales Back Anti-SARS Measures at Hospitals

01 April – The Star reported that Singapore was reducing its anti-SARS measures at hospitals, eight months after the city-state's last reported case of the flu-like illness. "The risk of SARS being imported into Singapore is currently extremely low in view of the few sporadic cases that have occurred without any local transmission," the Health Ministry said in a statement. All hospitals lifted restrictions limiting the number of visitors allowed to see each patient. Previously patients were only allowed visits from a pool of four people who had to register with the hospital, the ministry said. Also hospital staff would no longer be required to take their temperatures daily and visitors are now no longer required to leave their details so they could be tracked down for possible quarantine, the ministry said. Singapore's last SARS patient fell ill after being exposed to the virus in a lab in September 2003. [View Article](#)

South India Suicide is World High

02 April – BBC News reported suicide rates among young people in southern India are the highest in the world, researchers say. A study published in the British medical journal The Lancet says family conflicts, domestic violence and mental illness are the most common triggers. The survey of 10- to 19-year-olds in the region around Vellore found that the average rate for women was 148 per 100,000, and 58 per 100,000 for men. The average suicide rate worldwide is 14.5 per 100,000. Globally, rates for men are three times higher than those for women. [View Article](#)

USSOUTHCOM

Deaths from Vampire Bats

03 April – BBC News reported bites from [rabies-carrying](#) vampire bats killed 13 people in a north-eastern Brazilian state last month, the health ministry said. The ministry said the record number of deaths was matched by an increase in bat attacks to about 300. A program to vaccinate domestic animals and people deemed at risk will begin in the area next week. One report suggests scientists believe deforestation may be a factor behind the increase in attacks. Laboratory tests have proven that six deaths in Para state were due to human rabies linked to bat bites, said health official Fernando Dourado, speaking to reporters in Belem. Test results have not yet arrived for the seven other victims, but they displayed similar symptoms and had also been bitten. Three people remain ill in hospital, one critically. The cases appear to be concentrated in areas close to Marajo - the world's biggest estuarine archipelago. [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/Hiouupdate/>.

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