

USACHPPM

HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE

24 December 2003

The HIO Update provides information regarding global medical and veterinary issues of interest to the United States (US) Army. The update does not attempt to analyze the information regarding potential strategic or tactical impact to the US Army and as such, should not be regarded as a medical intelligence product. Medical intelligence products are available at <http://mic.afmic.detrick.army.mil/>. The information in the HIO Update should provide an increased awareness of current and emerging health-related issues.

HOT TOPICS2
 BSE Preliminarily Detected in the United States 2
 Two Drugs Offer Hope for Prostate Treatment 2
 Poinsettias and Latex Allergy 2

FOCUS ON EPIDEMIOLOGY2
 Some in 296th Hit by 'Baghdad Boil' 2
 Influenza Update: 3

USEUCOM5
 Expert Sounds Alarm on Drug Overdose Deaths in Russia 5
 France: 29 cases of Legionellosis close to Lens 5
 Mad Cow Link Suspected 6
 Russia: Isolation of 2 Novel Lyssaviruses from Bats 6

USCENTCOM6
 Nothing significant to report. 6

USNORTHCOM.....6
 Judge Halts Military's Required Anthrax Shots 6
 Limited Supply of Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine 7
 New Case Definition for SARS 7
 Snowmobile Deaths on the Rise in US 7
 U.S. Scientists Learn More about Anthrax Spore Process 8

USPACOM8
 Singapore: Contacts of Taiwanese SARS Case Quarantined 8
 Singapore: Quarantine Order Lifted 8
 South Korea Grapples with New Bout of Bird Flu 9

USSOUTHCOM.....9
 Chile: Stations Opposed to AIDS Campaign Accused of Double Standards 9
 Yellow Fever Update 9

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

HOT TOPICS

BSE Preliminarily Detected in the United States

On 23 December 2003, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) reported the first suspected case of BSE within the United States in Washington State. This case was from a “downer” Holstein cow (unable to rise and walk on its own), and samples were collected at slaughter on 9 December 2003 as part of the USDA’s routine surveillance program for BSE. Final confirmation is being determined in the United Kingdom and results will be released within 3-5 days. USDA officials are investigating the origin of the animal and how its remains were processed. The farm where the cow first showed clinical signs was identified and has been quarantined. Information is available, and will be continually updated, at <http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/madcowdisease/>

Two Drugs Offer Hope for Prostate Treatment

19 December – The Washington Post reported a combination of two widely used drugs (the alpha blocker doxazosin and the testosterone blocker finasteride) can sharply reduce the risk that enlarged prostates will get worse, offering millions of men a dramatically more effective way to fend off the most miserable effects of one of the most common male afflictions. The largest and longest study of its kind found the two-drug therapy cut by a surprising two-thirds the likelihood that the condition would progress, sparing many from deteriorating to the point where they could not urinate and needed surgery. The authors of the study state that because of the large number of men affected by enlarged prostates and the extra cost of giving two drugs, the treatment should probably be reserved for men at highest risk that the disease will progress. [View Article](#)

Poinsettias and Latex Allergy

22 December - HealthDayNews reported if you're allergic to rubber latex, you might want to be careful around all those Christmas poinsettias. A study by Medical College of Georgia (MCG) researchers found about 40 percent of people with a rubber latex allergy were also allergic to poinsettias. Latex allergies affect about 8 percent of the general population. [View Article](#)

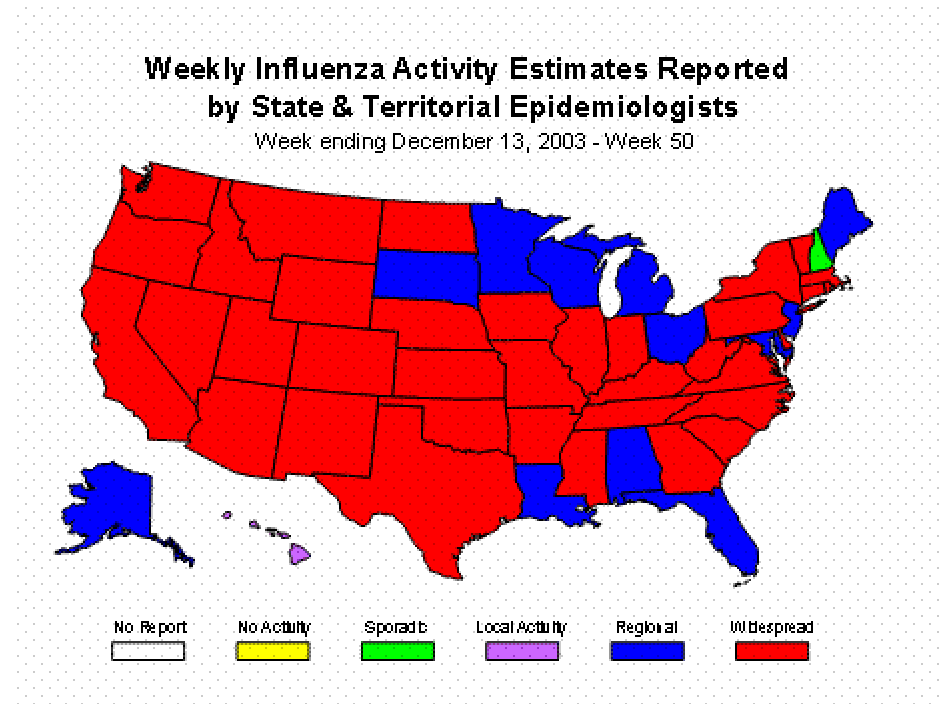
Focus on Epidemiology

Some in 296th Hit by 'Baghdad Boil'

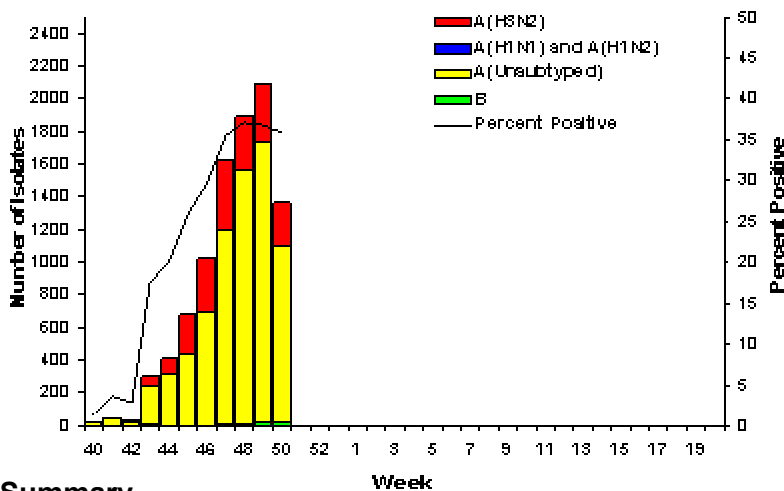
16 December – The Daily Leader reported approximately 80 percent of the soldiers with the Army Reserve's 296th Transportation Company in Brookhaven are infected with a parasitic disease contracted while serving in Iraq, according to the company commander. [Leishmaniasis](#) is a parasitic disease spread by the bite of infected sand flies, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta, and it can take weeks or even months for the first sores to begin to develop. People who have cutaneous leishmaniasis, the type most typically found throughout the Middle East, have one or more sores on their skin. The sores can change in size and appearance over time, but often end up resembling a volcano, with a raised edge and

central crater. Some sores are covered by a scab, but others are not, and the sores can be painful or painless. Soldiers refer to the disease as the "Baghdad Boil." [View Article](#) [View CDC Leishmaniasis Page](#)

Influenza Update:



WHO/NREVSS Collaborating Laboratories National Summary, 2003-04



WHO Summary

(Week 50, 7 December - 13 December 2003)

Influenza activity associated with influenza A(H3N2) viruses continues to increase in Africa (Tunisia), Europe (Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Norway, Russia, Switzerland, Russia Federation and Ukraine) and North America (the United States), and persists in France and some parts of Canada. In other European countries (Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom) and most parts of Canada, activity has declined. Most influenza infections this season have been attributed to influenza A(H3N2) viruses. The majority of viruses antigenically characterized so far have been shown to be A/Fujian/411/2002-like; the rest have been A/Panama/2007/99-like. There have been few reports of influenza A/Fujian/411/2002-like virus detections from Asia. Influenza A(H1) and B viruses have also been detected in some countries. Both B/Hong Kong/330/2001-like and B/Sichuan/379/99-like viruses have been identified. The hemagglutinins of all influenza A(H1) viruses characterized so far have been A/New Caledonia/20/99-like. Additional investigation of a recent [influenza A\(H9N2\) case in Hong Kong SAR China](#) is on going to determine the source of infection. Virus isolates have been sent to the [WHO Collaborating Centers for Reference and Research on Influenza](#) for sequencing and antigenic makeup characterising to update the diagnostic reagents available for [National Influenza Centers](#) . So far all further results of investigation appear to confirm the initial findings that this is an isolated case. [View Source](#)

Other Reports

19 December – Yahoo News reported the U.S. government is casting a wider net in its effort to track and control this year's influenza outbreak, which a top official is now calling an "epidemic" because 36 states are reporting widespread flu activity. Since the outbreak began, health officials had been cautiously avoiding the term epidemic because it was early and the numbers didn't justify it. But since the flu has struck every state, has hit hard in nearly three-quarters of them, and has -- anecdotally, at least -- been particularly rough on children, Dr. Julie Gerberding, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said it was unavoidable. [View Article](#)

19 December – Fox News reported the nation's top health agency activated its emergency operations center to deal with the flu outbreak, which has now claimed the lives of 42 children. Dr. Julie Gerberding, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said the agency sent out field teams to help states deal with the outbreak and evaluate the effectiveness of this year's flu shot. Gerberding said it is too soon to determine how severe this flu season will be. But in response to a question, she said at a briefing that the number of cases -- and the child deaths -- indicate the outbreak could be classified as an epidemic. She said the season has fallen under "typical" flu patterns, but it started much earlier than usual. At least 36 states have been labeled by the agency as having widespread flu activity, and no state has been untouched. [View Article](#)

19 December – ProMed reported the Ministry of Health in Armenia has closed all schools and kindergartens in Erevan because of the threat of an influenza epidemic. The number of patients with influenza has reached 5000, 3000 of whom are children, according to the newspaper Izvestiya. In Erevan (the capital of Armenia) itself, 700 people have contracted influenza. At the present time, all schools and kindergartens in Erevan are to remain closed until 1 Feb 2004. [View Report](#)

21 December – The CDC reported since October, 42 influenza-associated deaths among children aged <18 years have been reported to CDC. All patients had influenza virus infection detected by rapid antigen testing or other laboratory testing methods. A report describes

preliminary findings based on data provided from multiple states, as of December 17, 2003. To improve surveillance, CDC has requested that all influenza-associated deaths of children aged <18 years be reported to CDC through state health departments. [View Report](#)

23 December – Yahoo News reported the flu outbreak in hard-hit Colorado has apparently peaked and is beginning to ease, health officials said Monday. The flu has killed at least 11 children and one adult in Colorado this season. Last year, only two child flu deaths were reported to the state, none were reported the previous year and two were reported in the 2000-01 season. The total number of flu cases in Colorado had reached 10,707 by Monday — more than the 8,967 cases in the past four flu seasons combined. The number of new cases increased by 1,528 last week. But that was lower than the 1,579 the previous week and much lower than the 2,913 between Nov. 30 and Dec. 6. [View Article](#)

23 December – Yahoo News reported more than 15 of every 10,000 Dutch citizens have flu symptoms, enough to qualify the current outbreak as an epidemic, the National Flu Center said Tuesday. Infection rates have risen sharply in the last two weeks, said the center's director, virologist Ab Osterhaus, but the current influenza strains are normal and not especially dangerous. However, he said it was "worrisome" that this year's flu shots failed to give adequate protection against one common strain, called the "Fujian." Flu data is obtained from doctors who track the number of patients they treat with flu symptoms. Because only those who seek a doctor's help are reported, the percentage of people actually infected is higher. [View Report](#)

USEUCOM

Expert Sounds Alarm on Drug Overdose Deaths in Russia

19 December – Yahoo News reported the number of drug addicts in Russia has increased more than tenfold since the 1990s and the number of deaths by overdose has soared to alarming proportions, an international anti-drug expert said. "70,000 people die of drug overdoses every year in Russia," Galina Sillaste, with the International Anti-Drug Association (IADA) told a round table hosted by the Russian Union of Journalists. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime, citing official Russian figures, said in June that the number of drugs users in Russia was between three and 3.5 million, with between 350,000 and 500,000 people believed to be using heroin. According to anti-drugs officials, heroin use has multiplied by a factor of 23 in the past five years, amphetamine use by 20 and cocaine use by 10. [View Article](#)

France: 29 cases of Legionellosis close to Lens

22 December – ProMed reported 4 new cases of [Legionellosis](#) were reported on Fri, 19 Dec 2003 in Pas-de-Calais, where the epidemic whose origin remains unknown has affected 29 people overall, 3 of whom have died. The 4 new patients infected by this potentially serious pulmonary infection are men living in the area of Lens, age respectively 52 years (Bethune), 71 years (Noyelles-on-Lens), 76 years (Lens) and 78 years (Annay-on-Lens). 3 of them are hospitalized in Lens and Henin-Beaumont and the other, who was never hospitalized, is at home. 1 of the patients became ill on 5 Dec 2003, another 9 Dec, and the other 2 on 15 Dec. Among the 29 people infected, all in an area of less than 10 kilometers around Lens, 3 died and

14 remain hospitalized in Lens, Henin-Beaumont, and Bethune. The environmental investigation is underway, and control measures have already been taken at sites that pose a possible risk (disinfection of cooling systems). [View Report](#)

Mad Cow Link Suspected

23 December – The Washington Post reported British health authorities last week reported preliminary evidence that the human version of [mad cow disease](#) can be transmitted person-to-person by a blood transfusion. But restrictions on blood donations put in place several years ago make such transmission very unlikely today, experts said. The human disease, known as variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, is usually acquired by eating beef from animals affected by bovine spongiform encephalopathy, a brain-destroying syndrome commonly known as mad cow disease. About 150 human cases have been found worldwide since the bovine form appeared in the 1980s. Scientists have suspected the disease could be spread by transfusions. But a death in Britain is the first human case suspected of originating that way. Health Secretary John Reid told the House of Commons that a patient who died of the disease had received a transfusion in 1996 from a donor who was healthy but who in 1999 developed and later died of the disease. Officials suspect that the donor was infected at the time of the donation. There is no blood test for vCJD, but a year after the possibly fateful transfusion took place, Britain put in place new policies to minimize the chances of patients getting vCJD-infected blood. The disease has not been diagnosed in U.S. cattle, and the only American case was apparently acquired in Britain a decade ago. [View Article](#)

Russia: Isolation of 2 Novel Lyssaviruses from Bats

17 December – ProMed reported 2 new [rabies](#)-related viruses were discovered in Russia during 2002. Viruses were isolated from bats in Eastern Siberia near Baikal Lake and in the western Caucasus Mountains. After preliminary antigenic and genetic characterization, it was found that both viruses should be considered as new putative Lyssaviruses genotypes. [View Report](#)

USCENTCOM

Nothing significant to report.

USNORTHCOM

Judge Halts Military's Required Anthrax Shots

23 December – The New York Times reported a federal district judge ruled that the Defense Department could not compel members of the armed forces to be vaccinated against [anthrax](#) without their consent. The judge, Emmet G. Sullivan, issued a preliminary injunction that

prohibits Pentagon officials from "inoculating service members without their consent." The judge found that the vaccine in question, intended to protect military personnel against the potentially deadly effects of inhaled anthrax, was "an investigational drug," being used for an unapproved purpose. A Pentagon official said that more than one million people had received the anthrax vaccine from the Defense Department since 1998. They include active-duty personnel, members of the National Guard and employees of military contractors. Under federal law, scientists are generally supposed to obtain consent before giving anyone an investigational or unapproved drug. Another federal law says the president may waive this requirement for certain members of the armed forces if he determines, in writing, that obtaining consent is not feasible or "not in the interests of national security." Judge Sullivan said President Bush had not issued such a waiver. Moreover, the judge said, if the Bush administration finds that compulsory vaccinations are truly imperative, "then obtaining a presidential waiver would be an expeditious end to this controversy." The judge gave the government until the end of January to file a response. A Pentagon official said the Justice Department was reviewing the decision. Defense Department officials will meet soon to determine "the appropriate next steps," he said. Other Pentagon officials said it was not immediately clear if the department would have to stop giving the vaccine to service members while legal proceedings continue. The officials said they did not know when that decision would be made. [View Article](#)

Limited Supply of Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine

19 December – The CDC reported it has received notice from Wyeth Vaccines, the only U.S. supplier of [7-valent pneumococcal conjugate vaccine](#) (PCV7, marketed as Prevnar[®]), that production constraints could cause delays in shipments in the first or second quarters of 2004. Until full production capacity is resumed, local shortages might occur. To minimize shortages, Wyeth Vaccines will implement an allocation plan to ensure the equitable distribution of vaccine supply among private purchasers. CDC will work with Wyeth Vaccines to help achieve equitable vaccine distribution to the states that order through CDC contracts; this distribution will be based in large part on state PCV7 inventories and past usage. [View Report](#) [View More CDC Info](#)

New Case Definition for SARS

12 December – The CDC reported that it has revised the case definition for [SARS](#). The revised SARS case definition modifies the clinical, epidemiologic, laboratory, and case-exclusion criteria in the U. S. surveillance case definition used during the 2003 epidemic. In the clinical criteria, "early" illness replaces "asymptomatic" or "mild" illness. The epidemiologic criteria include the following new categories: 1) possible exposure to SARS-CoV and 2) likely exposure to SARS-CoV. Laboratory criteria for evidence of SARS-CoV infection reflect advances in testing technology. The case-exclusion criteria have been changed to allow for exclusion when a serum sample collected >28 days after onset of symptoms is negative for antibody to SARS-CoV. The revised case definition also classifies each SARS case as either a SARS report under investigation (SARS RUI) or SARS-CoV disease. [View Article](#)

Snowmobile Deaths on the Rise in US

19 December – Reuters reported last winter, the states of Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont reported 28 deaths from snowmobiles, the region's highest number of snowmobile-related deaths in 12 years, a new report indicates. In most cases, the fatalities occurred because drivers were speeding, inexperienced or not paying attention. The fact that any deaths occur

while snowmobiling illustrates that the activity can be dangerous, and requires caution and common sense, study author Dr. Leigh Ramsey told Reuters Health. "People need to realize snowmobiling is hazardous, it's not just something you can do carefree," Ramsey said. [View Article](#)

U.S. Scientists Learn More about Anthrax Spore Process

18 December – Global Security Newswire reported U.S. scientists have discovered how the bacterium that causes [anthrax](#), a dreaded biological weapons agent, creates the spore that allows it to survive harsh conditions for long periods of time, the University of Michigan Health System announced Tuesday. In a study to be published in next month's Journal of Bacteriology, scientists from the University of Michigan, the Institute for Genomic Research and the Scripps Research Institute detail their findings about the process of anthrax spore formation. Among the scientists' results was that as many as one-third of the genes in *the Bacillus anthracis* bacterium are involved in spore production." [View Article](#)

USPACOM

Singapore: Contacts of Taiwanese SARS Case Quarantined

18 December – ProMed reported Taiwan's 1st [SARS](#) patient in 5 months didn't strictly quarantine himself at home as officials originally said he did, and 2 colleagues who had close contact with him have flown to America, officials said on Thu 18 Dec 2003. These developments raised more serious questions about decisions made by the patient, a 44 year old military scientist who officials say might have caught SARS while mishandling virus samples in his lab. Officials also have said he allegedly wasn't wearing safety gear, like a gown and gloves. Although the researcher suspected that he might have been exposed to the highly contagious virus, he kept his plans to go to Singapore on 7 Dec 2003 to attend a conference, officials said. Singapore already has quarantined 70 people who had contact with the man. Taiwanese officials have issued quarantine orders for 25 people, including 3 Americans, one Japanese, and a Singaporean who flew with the scientist when he returned from Singapore on 10 Dec 2003. Officials said they were searching for the foreigners. So far, none of the quarantined has developed SARS symptoms, and officials have said the man was asymptomatic during his travels and probably didn't infect anyone. [View Report](#)

Singapore: Quarantine Order Lifted

22 December – ProMed reported Singapore sounded the all-clear after its latest [SARS](#) scare on Sat 20 Dec 2003, lifting mandatory home quarantine orders for 75 people who came into contact with a visitor from Taiwan who was infected with the SARS coronavirus. The Health Ministry in the Southeast Asian city-state, the only other country to report a case since an outbreak that killed hundreds of people worldwide was pronounced over in July, said 6 people who fell ill did not have SARS. [View Report](#)

South Korea Grapples with New Bout of Bird Flu

22 December – ABCAsiaPacific reported in South Korea, a highly contagious [bird flu](#) which was discovered last week in the country's central provinces, has continued to spread. Authorities report new cases have been discovered nearly 200 kilometres from where the outbreak began. South Korea's government has ordered the slaughter of nearly a million chickens and ducks in a bid to combat the flu, which threatens to infect humans. [View Article](#)

USSOUTHCOM

Chile: Stations Opposed to AIDS Campaign Accused of Double Standards

17 December – Inter Press Service News Agency reported scantily-clad models and actors telling off-color jokes are stars on the same TV channels in Chile that have refused to run government ads that encourage the use of condoms to prevent the spread of [HIV/AIDS](#). The Unified Movement of Sexual Minorities (MUMS) has taken legal action against three TV stations that have refused to broadcast the spots produced as part of the latest government AIDS prevention campaign. The stations say the ads run counter to their editorial policy by promoting the use of condoms, and because one of the spots shows a gay couple being physically affectionate. But MUMS and other civil society organizations accuse the TV stations of double standards. The refusal to air the campaign's four ads amounts to an attack on Chileans' right to health, because AIDS is a serious public health problem, argues the lawsuit brought on Dec. 15 by human rights lawyer Julia Urquieta, representing MUMS. According to the governmental National AIDS Commission (CONASIDA), there are 5,200 people living with HIV, the AIDS virus, in this Southern Cone country of 16 million, as well as 4,600 people with the symptoms of full-blown AIDS. But non-governmental organizations estimate the number of people testing positive for HIV at between 20,000 and 50,000. [View Article](#)

Yellow Fever Update

22 December – ProMed reported as of 6 Dec 2003 (Epidemiological week, EW 49) 226 cases of [jungle yellow fever \(JYF\)](#) have been reported to the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), with 99 deaths. The last reported case occurred during EW 45 in the Municipality of San Vicente del Caguan, Department of Caqueta, Colombia. 2 important outbreaks have occurred in the Region to this date, one in Brazil and one on the Colombian-Venezuelan border. These 2 outbreaks have been responsible for 82 percent of all reported cases. Peru and Bolivia have also reported cases. [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/Hioupdate/>.

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