Prediction, Prevention, and Preparedness: Using Climate Information for Public Health Decision Support

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The influence of climate on human health has been recognized since the days of Hippocrates. The use of climate information to help better prepare and manage climate-sensitive public health threats, however, is a relatively recent development. Does a wetter winter mean greater risk of West Nile Virus? Does an El Nino event portend an outbreak of Rift Valley Fever, and where should we vaccinate? What is the optimal method of mosquito control given certain climate conditions? What are the environmental conditions conducive to the spread of cholera? NOAA's Climate Variability and Health Program is designed to help answer these questions and more.

For well over a decade NOAA's Office of Global Programs (OGP) has supported research and application efforts aimed at understanding the interaction between climate and society. It is within this context that the Climate and Societal Interactions Division (CSI) established the Climate Variability and Health Program (CVHP). The CVHP explores the connection between climate variability and health, and use of climate information to enhance public health policy and decision-making. Working closely with government and academic partners at home and abroad, the CVHP addresses key research and application needs primarily for infectious diseases such as West Nile Virus, Hanta Virus, cholera, malaria, dengue, and Rift Valley Fever, as well as asthma and respiratory diseases.

Juli Trtanj, the CVHP Program Manager, will present a brief history of the CVHP and will then highlight key research findings and activities including the development of climate-based health early warning systems and risk assessment decision support tools.