

USACHPPM
HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE

10 June 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

Chemoprophylaxis Reduces Risk of Meningitis

5 June – The British Medical Journal published a study in which antibiotic prophylaxis reduced the risk of meningitis in people who had contact with patients with [meningococcal infection](#). Researchers identified five studies, including 1249 cases of meningitis and 4271 household contacts, of whom 1742 had had chemoprophylaxis. Treatment reduced the risk of developing meningitis by 89%, and the estimated number needed to treat to prevent one case was 218 people. They concluded that index patients should have chemoprophylaxis before discharge from hospital, as at least 3% will still be carrying the infection despite treatment. [View Study](#)

Effectiveness of Condoms in Preventing Sexually Transmitted Infections

1 June - An article, published in the Bulletin of the World Health Organization, is a review of the findings of prospective studies published after June 2000 that evaluated the effectiveness of condoms in preventing [sexually transmitted disease](#). The studies showed that condom use is associated with statistically significant protection of men and women against several types of STIs, including chlamydial infection, gonorrhea, and syphilis. The authors conclude that while condoms are not 100% effective, partial protection can substantially reduce the spread of STIs within populations. [View Article](#)

Flame Retardants Used on Computers Called Health Risk

4 June – The San Francisco Chronicle reported that dust on personal computers and other electronic gadgets can be contaminated with toxic substances that could lead to neurological and reproductive health problems. The health concerns are based mainly on laboratory tests on animals; no comprehensive studies have been done on humans. The toxic substances consist of manufacturing chemicals, called brominated flame retardants, which are used to help make PCs and other devices fire-resistant. Some PC companies have begun replacing flammable materials with nontoxic flame-resistant materials. The state of Maine has passed a bill banning certain kinds of the chemical by January, and other states, including California, have also called for a phase-out of the materials. Jeff Stier, associate director of the American Council on Science and Health, criticized the report's authors for exaggerating the dangers from brominated flame retardants. "Just because they can be measured does not mean they therefore have health consequences," said Stier. [View Source](#)

Global Prevalence of Childhood Underweight in 1990 and 2015

2 June – JAMA reported that one key target of the United Nations Millennium Development goals is to reduce the prevalence of [underweight](#) among children younger than 5 years by half between 1990 and 2015. Worldwide, the number of underweight children was projected to decline from 163.8 million in 1990 to 113.4 million in 2015, a change of –31%. In Africa, the prevalence of underweight was forecasted to increase from 24.0% to 26.8%, a change of 12%. In Asia, the prevalence was estimated to decrease from 35.1% to 18.5%, a change of –47%. An overall improvement in the global situation is anticipated; however, neither the world as a whole, nor the developing regions, are expected to achieve the Millennium Development goals. This is largely due to the deteriorating situation in Africa where all subregions, except Northern Africa, are expected to fail to meet the goal. [View Article](#)

Skin Cancer Vaccine Breakthrough

7 June – The Herald reported trials of an experimental vaccine for advanced cases of skin cancer have shown it may be possible to halt the progress of the disease. Scientists said that the trial – the largest of its kind – had shown that a patient's own immune system can be used to combat spreading [melanoma](#). The vaccine trials, carried out at Pittsburgh University, showed that it may be possible to improve the survival period of those with advanced skin cancer, although the treatment had no effect on tumors. A total of 120 patients with spreading melanoma took part in the trial, many of whom had not responded to other therapies. Patients received the vaccine by injection once every two weeks for 12 weeks. Immune reaction, associated with longer survival rates, was assessed in 75 of the patients, and in 31% cases a response was confirmed. The vaccine is made from three peptides – protein building blocks – derived from skin cancer cells. Skin cancer can take years before it is detectable, with symptoms including spots or sores that continue to itch, hurt or bleed, or persistent skin ulcers. [View Article](#)

Focus on Epidemiology

Malaria Transmission with Use of Insecticide-Treated Bednets

2 June – JAMA reported that a total of 130,000 residents of 221 villages in Asembo and Gem were randomized to receive insecticide-treated bednets in Western Kenya. After 3 to 4 years of bednet use, the mean number of *Anopheles* mosquitoes per house in the study area was 77% lower than in a neighboring area without bednets. All-cause mortality rates in infants aged 1 to 11 months were significantly reduced in intervention villages. The public health benefits of insecticide-treated bednets were sustained for up to 6 years. There is no evidence that bednet use from birth increases all-cause mortality in older children in an area of intense perennial transmission of [malaria](#). [View Article](#)

DoD-GEIS: West Nile Virus

9 June - [West Nile virus](#) (WNV) is established in the US as a seasonal epidemic in summer and continuing into the fall. Attention this year is again focused on the western US with California being especially at risk, as Colorado was last year. California public health officials suspect that WNV killed dozens of birds in recent months, including several recently in the San Gabriel

Other timely information can be found in:

The current issue of the Army Medical Surveillance Activity's [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

This week's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

USCENTCOM

Afghanistan Announces First Recorded AIDS Deaths in Country

2 June - VOA News reported Afghanistan's Health Ministry has announced the first recorded [AIDS](#) deaths in the country. Dr. Naqibullah Safi, head of the health ministry's HIV department, said a 45-year-old man and two of his children have died recently of AIDS in a Kabul hospital. He said the three are among 200 to 300 Afghans infected with HIV, the virus that causes the disease. Dr. Safi did not explain how the family got infected. But intravenous drug use and the lack of information about AIDS are seen as the most common reasons for the spread of the deadly virus in the war-torn country. The United Nations warned last year that a rise in intravenous drug use placed Afghanistan at risk of an AIDS epidemic. [View Article](#)

Aflatoxin Poisoning - Kenya (Makuei) (04)

8 June – ProMED reported that the death toll due to [aflatoxin](#) poisoning has risen to 80 in the Eastern province. It is expected that it may rise further. Initial reports of aflatoxin poisoning were reported in two districts, but more cases are reported from other districts in Eastern Province. [View Report](#)

Dengue Fever Breaks out in Western Saudi Arabia

5 June – The Khaleej Times Online reported [dengue fever](#), a mosquito-borne viral disease, has broken out in the Jeddah region, in western Saudi Arabia, a newspaper reported. At least 30 cases have been confirmed in Jeddah and the holy city of Mecca, Arab News said. Health and agriculture officials were spraying suspect areas for mosquito larvae. Dr. Ghazi Sheikh, director of preventive health for Jeddah, also urged the public to spray insecticide regularly indoors and clean out swimming pools. The paper noted that Jeddah is full of pools of stagnant water, overflowing septic tanks and leaking water pipes and inadequate drainage. Dengue hemorrhagic fever (DHF) affects most Asian countries and has become a leading cause of hospitalization and death among children in some of them. At least 2.5 percent of cases die and without proper treatment, DHF case fatality rates can exceed 20 percent. With modern intensive therapy, such rates can be reduced to less than one percent, according to the World Health Organization. [View Article](#)

Ebola Hemorrhagic Fever in South Sudan - WHO Update 4

8 June – ProMED reported that as of Sun 6 June 2004, the health authorities of Yambio County have reported a total of 28 cases, including 7 deaths from [Ebola hemorrhagic fever](#) (case fatality, 25 percent) in Yambio, Western Equatoria, south Sudan. [View Report](#)

Five Deaths in Hepatitis Outbreak in Punjab

8 June – ProMED reported that at least 5 people have died in an outbreak of [hepatitis](#) in the suburbs of Talagang, Pakistan. Scores of people have been admitted to hospitals suffering [jaundice](#). The hospital administrations are facing immense problems in dealing with the jaundice patients due to the limited facilities available. Tehsil Headquarter Hospital (THQ) reportedly had nothing with which to control this epidemic as the health administration has been unable to establish the emergency point or mobile vaccination teams for the patients so far. [View Article](#) and [Correction](#)

Hand Washing Cuts Diarrhea in Pakistani Children by More than Half

1 June – CNN News reported a program to promote hand washing in Karachi, Pakistan slums cut [diarrhea](#) cases among children by more than half. Cases were 53 percent fewer among children in households that received a free supply of soap and weekly educational visits from field workers, when compared with a control group that did not. Infants and severely malnourished children living in the high-risk communities of Bilal, Hazara, Manzoor and Mujahid also reported improvements from the improved hygiene. Infants in the target households reported 39 percent fewer days with the gastrointestinal condition compared with infants from control homes, while severely malnourished children under the age of five years had 42 percent fewer days with diarrhea than their control group counterparts. Nearly two million children die annually from diarrheal disease (studies estimate that hand washing could prevent up to one million child deaths a year). This study was based on the results of a program involving more than 4,500 children in 36 low-income Karachi neighborhoods. [View Article](#)

Iraq: Inadequate Sewage Disposal Blamed for Hepatitis Outbreak

1 June – IRIN News reported a [hepatitis E](#) outbreak was confirmed by Health Ministry officials at the end of March. The Rustamiya sewage plant looted last April in central Baghdad still has not been fixed. Frequent power cuts stop water pumps that keep sewage from flooding the streets. Even worse, the sewage can get sucked into drinking water supplies once the pumps start again. The main sewage treatment plant dumps one and a half tons of sewage into the Tigris River every day. With hot weather on the way, the ailing power grid will be further strained as millions of Iraqis resort to air conditioning to keep cool. As the "high season" for diarrheal disease approaches in Iraq, WHO and US Center for Disease Control officials are trying to remind people to clean their water. Officials recently passed out chlorination tablets and put up posters reminding families to boil their cooking water for at least five minutes. [View Article](#)

Two U.S. Soldiers Exposed to Sarin Nerve Agent in Iraq

June 2004 – The Directory of DOD Public Health Laboratory Services reported that a 155-millimeter artillery round containing [sarin](#) was found along the highway near Baghdad. The shell, which had been rigged as an explosive device, exploded before it could be disarmed, producing a small dispersal of sarin. Two soldiers who removed the bomb experienced symptoms consistent with low-level sarin gas exposure, which can include localized sweating, muscular twitching, running nose, tightness of the chest, shortness of breath and dimness of vision. Sarin can be inhaled, ingested, or absorbed through the skin and eyes. Sarin can cause convulsions, paralysis, coma and respiratory failure. However, small exposures can be treated with antidotes such as atropine or pralidoxime chloride. [View Article](#)

USEUCOM

Fox Tapeworm in Denmark

7 June – Epi News (Denmark) reported infection with *Echinococcus multilocularis*, the [fox tapeworm](#), is rare among humans. In the spring of 2004, the first human case of *E. multilocularis* was reported in Denmark. The patient, who died, was probably infected abroad. The incubation time is 5-15 years and the disease occurs most often in older people. In 2000, the first definite case among foxes in Scandinavia was found in a fox killed by traffic in the Danish village of Taastrup. In Greater Copenhagen, three infected foxes have now been found among approximately 350 investigated. Otherwise, the prevalence is highest in Switzerland and southern Germany, where up to 60% of foxes are infected. In northern Germany, approximately 1% of foxes are carriers. Fox tapeworm can also be found in dogs and cats, but research performed at the Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University (RVAU) in 2003 has shown that the tapeworm's eggs do not mature in cats, for which reason cats do not spread the infection. The parasite is usually transferred between foxes and mice. The risk of infection can be limited by avoiding attracting foxes to the immediate environment, particularly by not feeding foxes and by ensuring that refuse and kitchen compost are covered or kept at a height where the fox cannot reach it. Sandboxes may be covered at night. Vegetables from the kitchen garden should be washed thoroughly, particularly those that are eaten raw, e.g., berries and lettuce. Hunters should wash their hands thoroughly after handling foxes. [View Article](#)

Cholera Epidemic Coming to an End

7 June – AllAfrica.com reported the Mozambican health authorities say that the [cholera](#) epidemic, that has been raging in parts of the country since December, has come under control, thanks both to the onset of winter and the improvement of sanitation conditions in some urban centers. Maputo city health director Olivia Ferreira, cited in the daily paper "Noticias", said that the Cholera Treatment Centre (CTC) at the Mavalane General Hospital is currently receiving only two or three patients a day, compared with more than 300 a day at the peak of the epidemic. Only five patients were still under medical care at the center. During the first three to four months of this year, the Mavalane CTC would always be treating more than 100 patients at a time. Since the outbreak of the disease in Maputo, during the first week of December, the Mavalane CTC has treated about 12,000 patients, with 40 deaths, all from Maputo city. [View Article](#)

Region's Crisis in Heart Disease

4 June – The Birmingham Post reported that 32 people under the age of 65 die in the West Midlands each week from [heart disease](#). However, the figures published by the British Heart Foundation reveal death rates from the disease - the UK's biggest killer - are falling nationally. While fewer people are dying from coronary heart disease (CHD), more people than ever are living with it. The UK death rate from CHD remains one of the highest in Western Europe, and mortality rates are highest in urban areas. [View Article](#)

USNORTHCOM

Environmental Protection 'Embedded' into Everyday Life on US Military Bases

2 June – VOA News reported in April, attorney generals from 39 states urged the U.S. Congress to reject a Pentagon proposal that would relax environmental laws on military bases. Since the passage of the Clean Air, Water and Endangered Species Acts in the early 1970s, the Pentagon has had to comply with strict environmental laws governing how it manages its military reservation land. There are more than 425 military installations in the United States, encompassing 12 million hectares of largely undeveloped land. In the first of three reports from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, VOA's Rosanne Skirble examined how one of the world's largest and busiest military installations has embraced environmental protection as a means to fulfill its training mission. [Read Report](#)

FDA Approves First Blood Test for Anthrax

7 June – Reuters reported more than two years after [anthrax](#) killed five people in the United States, the Food and Drug Administration has approved the first blood test for the bacteria. Immunetics Inc., a diagnostics technology firm, developed the test at the behest of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention after anthrax-laced letters provoked a scare just weeks after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. The test can be used by any laboratory or hospital without the need for special equipment or training. "The approval represents a significant step forward in the public health community's ability to diagnose anthrax," Immunetics chief executive Andrew Levin said in a statement. "The test was shown to detect 100 percent of the anthrax patients tested in clinical trials, with less than a 1 percent chance of false positive results." The test can detect both inhalational and cutaneous cases of anthrax. The bacteria is considered the top biological weapon threat and can be transmitted through inhalation of the spores, into a cut in the skin or by ingesting contaminated meat. [View Article](#)

GAO Urges More Scrutiny of Antibiotic Use in Animals

3 June - CIDRAP News reported that the General Accounting Office (GAO) has urged federal agencies to step up their efforts to determine if the use of certain antibiotics in animals endangers human health by making bacteria resistant to those antibiotics. The GAO said the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) should speed up its risk assessments to determine whether it should restrict the use in animals of antibiotics considered critically important to human health. The GAO also recommended that the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) work together to collect information on the types and amounts of antibiotics used in animals. The GAO concluded that antibiotic-resistant bacteria have been transferred from animals to humans and that this transfer appears to pose significant risks to human health. Genetic studies of bacteria have established that antibiotic-resistant *Campylobacter* and *Salmonella* are transferred from animals to humans. [View Source](#) [View Report](#)

Lax U.S. Power Plant Rules Killing Thousands - Study

9 June – Reuters reported that over 90 percent of the 23,600 annual deaths caused by pollution from aging coal-fired power plants could be prevented if the U.S. government adopted stricter rules, according to a study by environmental groups. The report criticized the Bush administration for trying to roll back existing clean air laws which the report said would result in nearly 4,000 more annual deaths from asthma, heart attacks and other ailments linked to coal plant emissions. The report takes aim at an administration proposal that would require U.S. utilities to cut their emissions of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides by 70 percent after 2015. Democrats and environmental groups unsuccessfully sought steeper cuts on a faster timetable. The EPA estimated its new rules would result in 14,100 fewer annual deaths a year by 2020 from fine particles emitted by power plants that cause respiratory problems like asthma. [View Source](#)

Military to Study Head Injuries among Vietnam Vets

7 June – Science Blog reported National Naval Medical Center leaders announced in May that the hospital is the site for a 30-year post-injury follow-up study to determine the long-term effects of a traumatic brain injury sustained in combat in Vietnam veterans. The Vietnam Head Injury Study (VHIS) Phase III is being used to determine the long-term effects of head injuries on general cognition, memory, and long-term neurological, psychological and social functioning. [View Article](#)

More Chickens Culled in Texas Outbreak of Avian Flu

3 June - CIDRAP News reported that another flock of about 24,000 chickens was sacrificed near the site of an outbreak of [avian influenza](#) in Texas after screening tests indicated possible infection, according to the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC). A flock of 24,000 chickens in Hopkins County in northeastern Texas was euthanized last week after tests indicated the presence of an H7N3 avian flu virus. This week, preliminary tests of a second flock, located about 5 miles from the first one and owned by the same company, suggested some of the chickens had the virus, the TAHC said in a news release yesterday. Pilgrim's Pride Corp. owned the flocks. The virus has not been isolated from either flock. Officials have said the virus may have low pathogenicity, because there was little evidence of increased death or illness in the flocks. [View Article](#)

Plant Experts Predict Widespread Outbreak of Infection that Damages Wheat Crops

6 June- The News Tribune reported plant experts are predicting a widespread outbreak of wheat scab, a fungus that withers the grain and produces a chemical that can sicken humans and livestock. Wheat scab, also known as [Fusarium head blight](#), is present every year in small amounts but this year probably will cover crops from the mid-Atlantic to as far west as Missouri or Arkansas, said Erick DeWolf, assistant professor of plant pathology at Penn State University. The disease, a brown film-like covering, is already abundant in Virginia. "It is pretty bleak," said Don Hershman, extension plant pathologist for the University of Kentucky. "In fact, I just talked with the pathologist at Indiana a little while ago and he said it's bleak there. Illinois isn't good,

and Ohio's starting to slide, too." Scab forms when the Fusarium spores settle in flowering wheat plants. If there's enough moisture and the right temperature conditions -- too cold and the spores won't grow, too hot and evaporation steals the moisture -- the infection will set in the head as the grain begins to form. The fungus robs the grain of nutrients, turning the kernels into pale, pruned ghosts of their potential selves. It also produces a chemical called deoxynivalenol, or vomitoxin, that poses a health risk to both people and animals. [View Article](#)

USPACOM

11 Die of Unknown Disease in Achham

2 June – Kantipur Online reported at least 11 people have died of an unknown disease in the remote VDC of Achham district in Nepal within the last three weeks. An Achham correspondent reports 11 people of Basti VDC died of an unknown disease while over dozen have been infected by the disease in the VDC. According to a local man who arrived in the district headquarters, 4 people each died in ward 5 and 3, while 2 died in ward 8 and one in ward 4 of the VDC. Of the dead, 3 are women and 8 men. There is possibility of rapid epidemic effect of the disease due to dearth of medicines and health workers. [View Article](#)

Dengue Hemorrhagic Fever increasing in Bengkulu, Indonesia

3 June – ProMed reported [dengue hemorrhagic fever](#) (DHF) is still increasing in Bengkulu province, Indonesia. At least 30 cases of DHF were treated in the Yunus Hospital at Bengkulu city last week. During this period one patient died, the source said. From February to March 2004, DHF has affected 92 patients in that province; 3 of them died. The Indonesian Ministry of Health in Jakarta has registered a total of 58,301 cases of dengue fever (DF) and DHF, and 658 deaths, from 1 Jan - 30 Apr 2004. Outbreaks with significant numbers of DF and DHF cases have been reported from 293 cities and districts in 17 provinces in the country, although all 30 provinces have been affected. [View Article](#)

Risk Factors for Typhoid and Paratyphoid Fever in Jakarta, Indonesia

2 June – JAMA reported that in Jakarta, [typhoid](#) and paratyphoid fever are associated with distinct routes of transmission, with the risk factors for disease mainly within the household (typhoid) or outside the household (paratyphoid). Paratyphoid fever among cases was associated with consumption of food from street vendors and flooding. Risk factors for typhoid fever using the community control group were mostly related to the household, i.e., to recent typhoid fever in the household, no use of soap for hand washing, sharing food from the same plate, and no toilet in the household. Also, typhoid fever was associated with youth. In comparison with fever controls, risk factors for typhoid fever were use of ice cubes and female sex. Fecal contamination of drinking water was not associated with typhoid or paratyphoid fever. Researchers did not detect fecal carriers among food handlers in the households. [View Article](#)

Situation of North Korean Children Bleak, says UNICEF

2 June – VOA reported that the U.N. Children's Fund says the situation of children in North Korea remains generally bleak, but the presence of humanitarian agencies is helping to make improvements. A survey conducted in 2002 shows 42 percent of North Korea's children below

seven years of age are chronically malnourished. UNICEF reports malnutrition rates since have been reduced. It says progress also has been made in bringing immunization coverage up from 35 percent in the mid-90s to more than 75 percent now. The UNICEF representative notes during the past six months, international food aid to North Korea has been irregular. Japan cut off its food assistance altogether, and South Korea and the United States have periodically reduced shipments. The resulting shortfall has forced the World Food Program to cut food rations for three million people, almost half of its beneficiaries. UNICEF's representative in North Korea, Pierrette Vu Thi, says she is encouraged by signs of goodwill shown by the North Korean government. One such sign, she says, is that the government allowed aid agencies to go to Ryongchon, the site of a devastating train explosion in April, within 48 hours of the accident. [View Article](#)

USSOUTHCOM

Update on Measles in Mexico

5 June – ProMED reported that as of 17 May 2004, the Mexican Secretariat of Health has reported 64 cases of [measles](#) this year, all linked to an imported strain with origins in Asia. The cases have occurred in 5 areas: the Federal District and the states of Mexico, Hidalgo, Campeche, and Coahuila. Mexico reported only 44 cases of measles in 2003, no cases in 1997 and 1999, and few cases during intervening years. Most of the persons affected have been older than 15 years of age. The Mexican government has launched a vaccination campaign and enhanced surveillance in response to the situation. [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/Hiupdate/>.

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