

USACHPPM
HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE

07 March 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.

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HOT ISSUES

Computer's Mouse May 'Bite' Hands, Wrist, Neck

28 February – Reuters reported the more you click your computer's mouse, the greater the chance of suffering from pain, swelling, numbness and other problems in the hand, wrist, neck and shoulder. In one study, Dr. Chris Jensen and colleagues from the National Institute of Occupational Health in Copenhagen found that workers who used computers for more than two-thirds of their work time had a higher risk of developing hand or wrist problems. However those who worked in front of a computer almost all day and used the mouse at least half the time had a four-fold higher risk of problems than those who used the computer the same amount of time but used the mouse only a quarter of the time. In a second study, researchers from the Odense University Hospital and Glostrup and Herning hospitals found that those who used the mouse for more than 30 hours per week had as much as an eight-fold higher risk of developing forearm pain, double the risk of moderate to severe neck pain and triple the risk of right shoulder pain. Neck and right shoulder symptoms started to become evident after more than 25 and five hours of weekly use, respectively. [View Article](#)

Drive to Cut Hospital Infection Deaths

02 March – BBC News reported experts have launched an initiative to reduce the number of patients who die from infections acquired while they are in hospital. It is thought that many lives could be saved if doctors starting using appropriate antibiotics to tackle infections at an early stage. However, approximately 30% of patients receive inappropriate antibiotic treatment for their hospital-acquired infection (HAI). Research suggests that up to 90% die as a result. Part of the problem is the bacteria that cause HAIs are becoming resistant to current drug treatments and doctors are not keeping pace with a constantly evolving situation. Now international experts in hospital infections have joined forces to set up the Academy for Infection Management (AIM) to raise awareness of the problem. They believe by spreading good practice it should be possible to dramatically improve survival rates, reduce the time spent undergoing antibiotic

therapy and length of stay in hospital and bring down healthcare costs. A recent study involving 2,000 intensive care unit patients found the death rate for infected patients who received appropriate antibiotic therapy at an early stage was 17.7%. Among those who received inappropriate drugs the death rate was 42%. A second study of patients with blood stream infections found appropriate treatment cut the average length of hospital stay from 11 days to nine days. [View Article](#)

Gene Controls Cancer Spread

01 March – BBC News reported researchers have identified a gene responsible for the spread of cancer in the body. They hope the discovery could lead to new ways to stop the development of secondary, or metastatic tumors. These secondary tumors are formed when cancer cells migrate throughout the body. The researchers, from Georgetown University, have found knocking out a gene that controls production of a chemical called cyclin can halt this migration. Dr Richard Pestell and his colleagues are currently attempting to "fine tune" exactly how cell migration differs from cell proliferation so they can devise targeted drug therapy. The research is published in the journal Molecular Biology of the Cell. [View Article](#)

High-Dose Vitamin D Prevents Bone Breaks in Elderly

28 February – Reuters reported inexpensive, high-dose vitamin D supplements could reduce fractures in the elderly by more than 20%. The brittle-bone disease osteoporosis is common among the elderly, but scientists at the University of Cambridge in England have shown that large doses of vitamin D, taken only every four months, can cut the risk of broken bones among 65 to 85 year olds. Total fracture incidence was reduced by 22 percent and fractures in major osteoporotic sites by 33 percent. The research team found the vitamin supplement, taken every four months for five years, helped women more than men. Women taking the supplement were 32% less likely to have a fracture, while only 17% fewer men broke bones if they took the supplement. [View Article](#)

Mutation Can Lead to Heart Failure

27 February - MSNBC News reported researchers have shown that an abnormal form of a protein can be a fundamental cause of congestive heart failure. Earlier studies in animals had suggested that the protein phospholamban, or PLN, played a key role. Now, by studying four generations of a family in which heart disease was common, researchers have shown that an abnormal form of the protein molecule was the primary cause. Dr. Christine Seidman, a researcher at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute and Harvard Medical School, said the abnormal PLN disrupts the calcium cycle in heart muscle and causes the heart to lose its ability to efficiently pump blood. Calcium causes heart muscles to contract and PLN then helps move the calcium away so that the muscles can relax between beats. This action, called a calcium pump, is essential for the proper beating of the heart. Seidman, co-author of a study appearing Friday in the journal Science, said her study shows that a gene mutation produces an abnormal form of PLN, which, in turn, disrupts the calcium pump and causes congestive heart failure. Both Seidman and another doctor who has done research with animals said the discovery may now make it possible to develop a drug that specifically controls the action of PLN or the movement in and out of the muscles of calcium. [View Article](#)

Peanut Treatment for TB

03 March – BBC News reported a chemical found in peanuts may be an effective treatment for tuberculosis, research suggests. TB causes the death of more than two million people worldwide each year. However, most who are exposed to the bacterium that causes the disease show no ill effects. This suggests that in most cases the immune system is strong enough to prevent the bacterium from causing disease. The chemical nitric oxide (NO) is thought to play a key role in mobilizing the body's defenses. Many nuts contain a lot of arginine, which the body uses to produce NO, but peanuts are especially rich in this nutrient. Scientists believe it is a deficiency of NO that makes some people vulnerable. In theory, boosting NO levels could correct the problem. Scientists from Linköping University in Sweden tested the theory in a study involving 120 patients with TB in Ethiopia. Symptoms such as serious coughing cleared up more rapidly, and spit tests showed a lower level of TB bacteria than those who took a placebo. The researchers believe that arginine therapy could reduce the length of time that patients have to take standard drug treatments. The research is published in the European Respiratory Journal. [View Article](#)

Sugar Study Fuels Food Fight

03 March - CBS News reported people should get no more than 10 percent of their calories from sugar, experts say in a major new report Monday on how to stem the global epidemic of obesity-linked diseases. The study is the most significant in more than a decade on what the world should be doing about its diet. Although concerns about sugar intake are not new, very few experts have recommended a specific limit. The food industry immediately decried the document, insisting more exercise is the key to ending obesity. The experts say heart disease, diabetes and other diseases that can be caused by poor diet and lack of exercise are no longer just the preserve of the Western world. The report underlines what doctors have been saying for years - that along with regular exercise, a diet low in fatty, sugary and salty food is key to staying healthy. But when it came to sugar, their advice was some of the boldest yet. The experts said people should restrict their consumption of added sugar - meaning sugar not naturally present in honey, syrups and fruit juices - to below 10 percent of calories. [View Article](#)

USEUCOM

Angola: 22 Children Die of Measles in Kwanza-Sul

27 February – AllAfrica.com reported at least 22 children below 15 in Angola's central coastal Kwanza-Sul province have died of measles over the last two months. According to Kwanza-Sul Vaccination Program director Rosa Rilvert, the 22 were part of the 163 cases registered in the local hospital units, although believing that further cases may have gone unreported. A seminar on diagnosing and treatment of measles opened Wednesday in the provincial capital of Sumbe with 36 health workers attending, in an initiative of the local Public Health Department. [View Article](#)

Cote d'Ivoire: Crisis Puts A Brake On Leprosy Program

05 March – AllAfrica.com reported since the outbreak of the war in Cote d'Ivoire, which has divided the country into a rebel-held north and a government-controlled south, many leprosy patients no longer have access to multi-drug therapy (MDT), according to Djakeaux Simplicie, director of the national anti-leprosy program. The program has lost contact with about 650 patients who were being monitored in areas now under rebel control, he said. MDT cures leprosy in six to 12 months depending, among other things, on the state of advancement of the disease when the treatment is started. In Cote d'Ivoire, its use has slashed the number of leprosy cases from 120,000 about two decades ago to 1,696 today. Now, however, the armed conflict could erode the gains of past years. Djakeaux fears that the situation could cause many of the 650 patients no longer undergoing treatment to relapse. That could eventually lead to a higher incidence of leprosy since people whose treatment is incomplete can spread the germ that carries the disease, he said. [View Article](#)

DRC: Seismic Activity Rising Steeply on Mt Nyamuragira

28 February – IRIN News reported scientists at the Goma Volcano Observatory in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo said that seismic activity was increasing very fast on Mt. Nyamuragira, which could erupt in a matter of weeks, or even days. The observatory said its scientists were trying to forecast the eruption and prevent possible panic. Local authorities, UN agencies and NGOs would be informed, it said. Seismic stations at Luboga, Katale and Kunene have been observing the activity. The observatory reported that a spasmodic tremor had been observed on 19 and 23 February with a strong quake located in the crater. Mt Nyamuragira erupted in 2001 without causing casualties. However, the nearby Mt Nyiragongo erupted on 17 January 2002, causing up to 350,000 people to flee Goma. [View Article](#)

Five Million Ugandans Face Risk of Sleeping Sickness

01 March – ProMed reported Tsetse flies have spread to 70 percent of the territory of Uganda, putting 5.1 million people at risk of catching sleeping sickness. The tsetse flies and the diseases they cause are spreading to areas that were formerly free of such diseases, adding that sleeping sickness and nagana were spreading to Kumi, Soroti, and Kaberamaido districts in eastern part of the country, where they had not been known before. The disease is fatal if it is untreated and causes abortions, sterility, and other gynecological problems among women. Forty percent of cattle in Uganda risk catching nagana, adding that the government is fighting the disease, but it is being hampered by lack of enough money. [View Report](#)

Ghana: Lack of Potable Water Hampers Guinea Worm Eradication

02 March – AllAfrica.com reported lack of potable drinking water in certain rural areas of the country has made the eradication of Guinea worm infection difficult. According to the Minister for Health, Dr. Kwaku Afriyie, even though the disease has been decreasing over the past two years and is now confined to only three regions, the unavailability of potable drinking water has made the eradication of the disease difficult. He said the disease is prevalent in areas where the drinking water is infested making Ghana the country with the second highest incidence of Guinea worm in the world. Health officials say about 500 cases of Guinea worm were reported last year. [View Article](#)

Mad Cow Menace? Never Mind

28 February – CBS News reported experts previously estimated that anywhere between a few hundred to 100,000 people in Britain could eventually get the fatal brain-wasting illness, variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease. Now, new research published by the Royal Society, Britain's academy of scientists, forecasts that as few as 10 additional people and as many as 7,000 could get the illness by 2080. Variant CJD has killed 132 people so far - 122 of them in Britain. Much uncertainty still surrounds the likely course of the epidemic, said James Ironside, director of Britain's national Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease surveillance unit, who was not involved in the research. [View Article](#)

Mauritania: Outbreak of Crimean-Congo Hemorrhagic Fever in the Capital

03 March – ProMed reported an outbreak of Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever has been documented in Nouakchott, the capital of Mauritania. In total, there have been 19 cases and 5 deaths. The index case was detected on 18 Feb 2003. The last new case was identified on 28 Feb 2003. [View Report](#)

Meningococcal Disease in Burkina Faso

27 February – WHO reported as of 23 February 2003, the Ministry of Health of Burkina Faso has reported 3,107 cases of Meningococcal disease, including 480 deaths. Of the 53 districts in Burkina Faso, 7 districts have reached the epidemic threshold and 9 districts are in the alert phase. The incidence overall is still increasing. Preliminary results from samples tested indicate *Neisseria meningitidis* serogroups A and W135 are responsible for the infections. The Ministry of Health, which has established a Crisis Committee, is implementing measures to control the outbreak: reinforcement of the epidemiological and laboratory surveillance, case management with oily chloramphenicol and a mass vaccination campaign. [View Article](#)

Netherlands: Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza

04 March – ProMed reported an outbreak of Influenza A- (H5N1), otherwise known as Avian Influenza (AI) has been confirmed in the Netherlands. At this moment there are 16 poultry farms suspected of Avian Influenza. The Reference Laboratory, the Central Institute for Animal Disease Control (CIDC), confirmed the diagnosis of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza with the PCR test on 2 Mar 2003. The virus is an H7 subtype for which nucleotide sequencing has demonstrated the presence of multiple basic amino acids at the cleavage site of the hemagglutinin. The IVPI results are not yet available. Control measures are in effect including a ban on poultry transport and export, a ban on events where live poultry is brought together and the tracing of poultry and poultry products. [View Report](#)

Outbreak of Trichinella in Poland

02 March – ProMed reported on an outbreak of Trichinella in Poland from wild boars. The number of number of people who so far have had contact with infected meat is at least 124, and 11 patients have been hospitalized. The current outbreak involves an equal mixture of domestic and wild pigs; both butchers involved had veterinary certificates for meat examination. Probably a small wild animal of about 30 kg was added during meat preparation. Such weight indicates

an error in calculations of the total weight of meat used, so this may indicate, for example, the addition of a nutria or other animal that had no certificate of veterinary analysis for Trichinella.

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Spain: Fatal Adult Case of Measles Virus Pneumonitis

27 February – ProMed reported an outbreak of measles in Almeria (southeastern Spain) has resulted in the death of a 33-year-old woman as a consequence of complications of viral pneumonitis. According to Health Delegate Manuel Lucas, 70 persons have contracted the virus since the second week in February 2003. Lucas has issued a call for all people between the ages of 20 and 35 years who have not had the disease or been vaccinated to go to health centers to receive the vaccine. Lucas explained that this is a segment of the population that, in general, was not vaccinated because in Spain, at that time, measles was no longer included in the vaccination protocols. Approximately 1000 persons have already requested vaccination.

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Zimbabwe: 2348 New Cases of Foot-and-Mouth Detected

01 March – ProMed reported The Department of Livestock and Veterinary Services has detected about 2348 new cases of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) in Masvingo and Manicaland Provinces. In its monthly report, the department said in Zaka district, 38 new cases of FMD had been reported at Svuvure, Mandoro, Zaka, Pangani, Nhema, and Masavara dip tanks. There are fears that the department has insufficient vaccines to fight the outbreak. The shortage of vaccines, partly the result of Zimbabwe's severe foreign currency crisis, has prompted the South African meat industry to lobby its government to provide financial assistance to Harare to fight FMD. Fears that outbreak of the disease in Zimbabwe and Botswana could contaminate regional animals has also resulted in South Africa banning the importation of meat from Botswana and animal hides from Zimbabwe. [View Report](#)

USCENTCOM

Malaria Kills a Staggering 72 Children Daily in Kenya

03 March – AllAfrica.com reported about 20 million Kenyans - more than half the entire population - are regularly affected by the most deadly malaria parasite: *Plasmodium falciparum*. Children and pregnant women are most at risk. Each year, an estimated 26,000 children in Kenya die from direct consequences of malaria infection. The outbreaks occur shortly after the wet months of April and May. On the brighter side, however, the Ministry of Health in conjunction with local health service organizations and NGOs are managing the outbreaks each time they occur, through rapid response and public sensitization programs. This has effectively reduced death tolls. With adequate response teams, equipment and drugs, hospitals have been able to contain the outbreaks, but due to the very overwhelming nature of the outbreaks coupled with logistic problems, the attacks have briefly reeled out of control. [View Article](#)

Pakistan: Suspected Crimean-Congo Hemorrhagic Fever Deaths in Rawalpindi

28 February – ProMed reported 2 brothers suspected to be suffering from Crimean-Congo Hemorrhagic Fever (CCHF) died on Tue 25 Feb. These deaths occurred 5 days after a similar incident was reported from a nearby Hospital. The victims (3 and 5 years of age) had come to the hospital from Gawalmandi; a city mostly inhabited by lower-middle-class families and has highly unhygienic environs. Seven "close contacts", excluding the immediate relatives of the victims, have been identified and isolated. The exact number of people under surveillance is 16. The pediatric emergency ward and intensive care unit, where the 2 boys were kept for treatment, have been sealed and disinfected. Blood samples of both the victims have been collected by National Institute of Health, Islamabad and will be sent to South Africa for analysis. The confirmation of the disease type can only be made after the report from South Africa is received, and until then, these cases will continue to be treated as suspected. The 2 children had cared for and played with livestock prior to Eid-ul-Adha (a Muslim holiday signifying sacrifice), and animals are sacrificed for 3 days. The holiday lasted from 12 to 14 Feb 2003. Thus, these children were in close contact with the animals prior to the holiday and probably were exposed to the tick *Hyalomma marginatum*. The incubation period is around 2 to 7 days but has been reported to be as long as 12 days. [View Report](#)

Saudi Arabia: Alkhurma Virus in Jeddah

03 March - 7 cases of Alkhurma Virus have been detected in Jeddah. The disease is in its early stage. All the cases are under control and have been treated. The disease was first thought to be dengue fever, as the symptoms of the two diseases are very similar and the Alkhurma Virus is related to the virus that causes Dengue fever. The main difference between dengue virus and the Alkhurma strain is that dengue is spread by mosquitoes, while Alkhurma can be caught through direct contact with animals and fresh meat, and is spread only by ticks. The first 6 patients were actually butchers. The fatality rate of the Alkhurma virus is much higher than that of dengue. The number of detected cases was small and therefore the situation is not considered dangerous although the discovery of the 7 cases has raised concern among the general public. They are complaining that they are not being provided enough information about the disease, which caused an epidemic in the Kingdom in 1994. [View Reports](#)

USNORTHCOM

Ambulance Crash-Related Injuries Among Emergency Medical Services Workers --- United States, 1991--2002

28 February – The CDC reported during 1991--2000, the most recent years for which data were available, 300 fatal crashes occurred involving occupied ambulances, resulting in the deaths of 82 ambulance occupants and 275 occupants of other vehicles and pedestrians. The 300 crashes involved a total of 816 ambulance occupants. The majority of the 27 EMS worker fatalities occurred in the front of the vehicle: 11 (41%) in the driver's seat and five (19%) in the front right-side seat. Those coded as "other enclosed" accounted for seven (26%) of the EMS worker fatalities. These persons probably were working in the patient compartment. Four EMS workers were listed in "other/unknown" seating positions. [View Article](#)

CDC Health Advisory: Recommendations To Enhance US Surveillance for Influenza A(H5N1)

03 March – DoD-GEISWeb reported the CDC has issued to state health departments recommendations to enhance US surveillance for Influenza A-H5N1. The purpose of these recommendations is to enhance the capacity to rapidly identify an importation of influenza A (H5N1) into the United States from Asia while maintaining effective public health response capacity. The enhancements will occur in a stepwise fashion based on the evolution of influenza A (H5N1) activity. These recommendations are in response to 2 cases of this strain of influenza in Hong Kong. The recommendations can be found at <http://www.geis.ha.osd.mil/GEIS/IDNews/HkfluCDC.asp>

CDC Looking into Smallpox Reactions

28 February – MSNBC News reported officials are investigating medical problems in three health care workers who became ill after receiving the smallpox vaccine, though only one appears to have had a reaction to the inoculation. It is the first report of injuries associated with the month-old civilian vaccination program. The three people, whom officials would not identify, live in Florida and are doing well. CDC officials plan a survey of 10,000 people vaccinated to measure less severe reactions to the vaccine. As of last week, 7,354 health workers had been vaccinated in 38 states and Los Angeles and New York, which are running separate programs. In addition, the military is in the process of vaccinating thousands of troops. [View Article](#) [View CDC Report](#)

FDA Proposes Warnings for Ephedra

28 February – MSNBC News reported bottles of the popular herb ephedra should bear warning labels that the pills can cause heart attacks, strokes or even kill, the Food and Drug Administration said. The FDA proposed the warning labels, reviving an attempt that the powerful dietary supplement industry had blocked for years, while saying a ban on at least some ephedra-containing products remains under discussion. The action came less than two weeks after a medical examiner announced that the heatstroke death of a Baltimore Orioles pitcher was probably linked to his use of ephedra. [View Article](#)

Mosquito experts: West Nile is just the beginning

04 March – CNN reported hundreds of bug experts have gathered for a six-day conference to discuss ways to control mosquitoes, amid fears of future West Nile virus outbreaks and concern that the insects could bring other diseases to the country. Because the world is more mobile, "fast and furiously" transporting exotic products, animals and bugs from continent to continent, there is an increased chance of spreading more mosquito-borne diseases such as yellow fever, dengue fever, malaria, encephalitis and Rift Valley fever. Michael Osterholm, director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota, said scientists should be working to predict what the next diseases might be, trying to prevent them and preparing to fight them, but he acknowledged that tough economic times have prompted states to cut government funding of research and mosquito control programs. Although most experts agree that pesticides are still the best way to control mosquitoes, there are alternatives, such as a soil bacterium that acts as a poison to the critters and a hormone mimic that prevents larvae from becoming adults. Other methods, such as mosquito-eating fish and dragonflies, are

less-widely used. Those attending the conference also planned to assess the threat of using mosquitoes to spread bioterrorism agents. [Review Article](#)

Patient Has Smallpox Related Infection

01 March – ProMed reported doctors in California are trying to determine how an adult's eye became infected with the same virus used in the military's smallpox vaccination program. The patient, had been in close contact with someone who had been inoculated, health officials said. However, Dr. Jonathan Fielding, Los Angeles County's director of public health, said it remained unclear exactly how the patient became infected. The vaccine is made with a live virus that can be spread by touching a vaccination site before it has healed or by touching bandages, clothing or other material contaminated with the live virus. This is the first known case in California linked to the national drive to vaccinate emergency health workers and military personnel. [View Report](#)

Resistant Bacteria Reports Cause Alarm in Boston

02 March – ProMed reported 5 men in Boston have been infected with a powerful, drug-resistant bacterium, strikingly similar to larger outbreaks in Los Angeles and San Francisco. Beginning last fall, doctors at the Fenway Community Health Center started seeing patients with pneumonia, sinus infections, and skin conditions caused by methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* a germ normally caught only in hospitals by patients already seriously ill from other diseases. Its appearance in the general community has alarmed health authorities. Fenway physicians alerted the CDC about the cluster of cases, and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health has begun an investigation, hoping to establish whether the cases are linked and, if so, to identify a common source of infection. The men are all HIV-positive, but neither physicians providing treatment nor disease investigators can say with certainty that the patients' HIV status had anything to do with the bacterial infection. [View Report](#)

USPACOM

Australia: 3 Dengue Fever Cases in Cairns Under Observation

03 March – ProMed reported 3 people in Cairns are believed to have the potentially fatal mosquito-borne disease dengue fever. The Tropical Public Health Unit says the men are believed to have contracted the disease at their workplace. They have been unwell but so far have escaped serious illness. Scientific officer Brian Montgomery says others could have been infected in the 10 days since the men were bitten. "We're a bit concerned because we don't know where they contracted the infection -- where the first case came from -- so we're performing control operations and really trying to alert the public that it's very important that they empty their containers around the yards," he said. [View Report](#)

Cows Vaccinated After Malaysia Foot-and-Mouth Scare

02 March – ProMed reported Malaysian authorities have vaccinated more than 200 cows in the northern state of Kelantan after 12 became infected with foot-and-mouth disease. The disease was detected last Tuesday in cows owned by 6 farmers at a local village in Kelantan, which borders Thailand. It was the third case of foot-and-mouth disease reported in Kelantan this year.

Local authorities have blamed the cases on the illegal entry of infected animals, especially from Thailand, ahead of the Eid Al-Adha Muslim festival last month. [View Report](#)

Genetic Characterization of the 2003 Human Isolate of H5N1 Influenza Virus

28 February – ProMed reported the new avian influenza virus that has killed at least one person in South China is genetically different from the avian influenza virus strain that infected 18 people in Hong Kong and killed 6 of them in 1997. Like the 1997 virus, the new strain does not appear to contain sequences from human flu viruses that would speed its spread from person to person, lessening fears that a lethal pandemic flu may be imminent. [View Report](#)

India: Millions More at Risk of Arsenic Poisoning Than Previously Thought

01 March – The British Medical Journal reported the number of people at risk of arsenic poisoning from drinking water from sunken wells may be considerably higher than previously thought. The first cases of arsenic poisoning in the Indian subcontinent were reported in India in 1983, and it has been known for several years that half the population of Bangladesh and many residents of West Bengal state were at risk. Now the danger is thought to extend beyond these areas. According to Dipankar Chakraborti of the School of Environmental Sciences, Jadavpur University, Calcutta, almost 330 million people may be at risk in India and Bangladesh compared to 150 million as believed earlier. Researchers from several Calcutta based institutions investigated water in the village of Semria Ojha Patti, in Bhojpur district of the Bihar state where tube wells were dug 20 years ago. They found its water similar to that in the highly contaminated wells of Bangladesh and West Bengal. The report is published online in Environmental Health Perspectives. [View Article](#)

Indonesia: Dengue Fever Approaching 5-year Peak in Jakarta

03 March – ProMed reported Jakartans should prepare themselves for one of the worst outbreaks of dengue fever in years, as the city, one of the regions with a high risk of dengue, will likely experience the peak of the disease's 5-year cycle this year. The worst months could be March and April. Public participation is the key to minimizing the spread of the disease. In addition, the city recently began monitoring the cases through hospitals and public health centers in each sub-district. The agency will follow up on every public report of dengue with an epidemiological investigation to confirm that the disease was genuine in that area. If they find that there are at least 2 persons who suffer from the fever in one area without clear reasons, they will work on the assumption that there is dengue proliferation there. As a follow up of the finding, the agency officers will examine larval matter from 20 houses in surrounding areas. If they find dengue-infected mosquito larvae the city health agency will send the officers to fumigate the whole area. [View Report](#)

Philippines: Abra on Alert to Prevent FMD Spread

02 March – ProMed reported provincial authorities have put up measures to curb the spread of the foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) after hogs in 4 Barangays communities were found positive for one of its strains. Veterinarian Diosdado Taverner, head of the provincial task force on FMD, said blood samples of hogs from barangays Cosili East, Cosili West, Calaba, and Zone 7 were sent to the Bureau of Animal Industry in Quezon City, and tests showed they were positive for

the "O" strain of the livestock disease. The FMD virus was traced to 30 hogs from La Union early last month. The animals became ill, forcing local agriculture officials to kill and dispose of them. La Union authorities, however, denied there was an FMD outbreak in their province, saying the hogs could have been infected while being transported. [View Report](#)

USSOUTHCOM

Brazil: Health Agents Combat the Malaria Mosquito in Madalena

02 March – ProMed reported following the confirmation of a case of malaria in the municipality of Santa Maria Madalena, approximately 240 km. from Rio de Janeiro, in the north central part of Rio de Janeiro, the Health Secretaries of the State and Municipal levels began a campaign to find new positive foci of the disease in the rural portion of the municipality. In 2003 alone there have been 12 persons who developed malaria, which is transmitted by the *Anopheles* mosquito. According to the chief of the malaria control program of the state, the epidemiologist Jose Carlos Rodrigues Paz, 11 cases were imported; only a summer visitor contracted the disease in Santa Maria Madalena. The goal of the health agents is to collect blood specimens from all of the approximately 1000 inhabitants of the locality Terras Frias where the above-mentioned locally acquired case has a farm. The health agents will also collect blood specimens from neighbors living close to the farm and look for positive *Anopheles* vectors in the municipality. Health agents will also enter the woods in Terra Frias in order to do mosquito capture. [View Report](#)

Dengue Fever Outbreaks in South America

03 March – ProMed reported on a number of Dengue Fever outbreaks in South America. The Ministry of Public Health confirmed 10 cases of dengue virus type 3 infection in Pedro Juan Caballero, Paraguay. Since 1989 Paraguay has reported outbreaks of dengue virus serotype 1, mostly in Asuncion and the frontier areas with Argentina and Brazil, but no fatalities. The more than 600 000 people who already had a dengue serotype 1 infection run the risk of developing hemorrhagic manifestations in case of a second infection by a different serotype. The country has been put under a state of alert and control measures are in place. Currently various Brazilian and Argentinian cities close to the Paraguayan frontier, and the Bolivian city of Santa Cruz, are reporting foci of dengue fever. Santa Cruz is reported to have 300 confirmed cases and 2 deaths, the Argentinian provinces of Salta and Misiones more than 260, and the Iguazu Falls in Brazil [on the Paraguayan frontier] 21 cases. In addition, 24 cases of dengue hemorrhagic fever (DHF) have now been reported in Ecuador during 2003. 21 of those cases are from Guayas province. This is greater than the 14 cases of DHF reported in all of 2002. [View Reports](#)

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