

## USACHPPM

# HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE

03 October 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 TOPICS

### Age at First Cereal Affects Diabetes Risk

01 October – Newsday reported age seems to matter when introducing cereal to babies genetically prone to [type 1 diabetes](#). Giving the foods too early in life increases diabetes risk as does introducing them after 6 months, two teams of researchers report today. Study author Dr. Jill Norris studied 1,183 children at elevated genetic risk for type 1. She discovered a narrow window - between 4 and 6 months - when cereals can be safely introduced. The same time frame is recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics. Giving babies cereals before 4 months, increased the risk of so-called autoantibodies, capable of attacking islet cells. Autoantibodies also were detected in the blood of children who were introduced to cereals after the age of 6 months. She hypothesizes that the youngest babies have extremely vulnerable immune systems. Older babies, denied solids for so long, simply ate more and overwhelmed still developing systems with foreign cereal proteins. The hypothesis has yet to be proved and Norris stressed the scenarios refer to at-risk babies. [View Report](#)

### Anti-viral Inhaler May Protect Against Smallpox

26 September – Reuters reported an inhaled form of cidofovir, an anti-viral drug, may provide protection against [smallpox](#), new research suggests. Findings from an animal study indicate that one dose of the drug stays in the lungs for a few days where it can protect against cowpox virus--a virus similar to smallpox -- that is often used in lab tests. Although cidofovir can kill a wide range of viruses, the drug has well-known kidney side effects that can limit its use. However, the authors found that by using inhaled cidofovir rather than an injectable form, lung levels of the drug could be increased and kidney levels greatly decreased. In addition to potentially reducing side effects, this is beneficial because the lung is the usual point of entry for smallpox.” [View Article](#)

### Aspirin Reduces Risk of First Heart Attack by One-third

29 September – Science Blog reported aspirin reduces the risk of a first [heart attack](#) by 32 percent, according to a report by researchers at Mount Sinai Medical Center & Miami Heart Institute published in the current issue of Archives of Internal Medicine. The paper, which is based on a meta-analysis of five major randomized clinical trials (55,580 participants, 11,466 women) in primary prevention, also found that aspirin reduces the combined risk of heart attack, stroke and vascular death by 15 percent. [View Article](#)

## Drinking Tea May Lower Bad Cholesterol - USDA Study

30 September – Reuters reported black tea consumption may lower [bad cholesterol](#) levels and could one day be used to help reduce the chance of heart disease for those at risk, U.S. researchers said. Scientists with the U.S. Department of Agriculture said they found consumers who drank black tea for three weeks experienced a decrease of between 7 percent and 11 percent in their low-density lipoprotein (LDL), or so-called bad cholesterol. Exactly what caused the LDL cholesterol level to drop in those who consumed tea was unknown, but tests are being conducted to determine if the beverage slows the body's ability to absorb LDL cholesterol, the scientists said. [View Article](#)

## Ginseng Use during Pregnancy May Hurt Baby

25 September – Reuters reported ginseng, the most commonly used herbal medicine worldwide, contains a chemical, called ginsenoside Rb1, which may harm a growing fetus, new findings suggest. Until further research is available, women should be cautious about using the herb during early pregnancy. Recent survey results suggest that ginseng use during pregnancy is common, he noted, with up to 10% of women in certain Asian countries reporting such use. In the new study, reported in the medical journal Human Reproduction, a team used rat embryos to assess the effect of different ginsenoside doses on growth and development. Overall growth and development was impaired in ginsenoside-exposed embryos compared with unexposed embryos and the degree of impairment increased as the ginsenoside dose rose. In particular, a big drop in arm and leg development was noted. These findings suggest that further investigations and monitoring of embryonic effects of ginsenoside on human pregnancy are warranted. [View Article](#)

## Gene Differences May Explain SARS Epidemic

01 October – Reuters reported a genetic susceptibility may explain why [SARS](#) raged last year in southeast Asia and nowhere else in the world outside of Toronto, Taiwanese researchers reported this week. They found a certain variant in an immune system gene called human leukocyte antigen, or HLA, made patients in Taiwan much more likely to develop life-threatening symptoms of SARS. The gene variant is common in people of southern Chinese descent, the team at Mackay Memorial Hospital in Taipei reported. Their finding, published in an online journal, BMC Medical Genetics, must be confirmed by independent researchers. But the Taiwanese team said the genetics could explain the puzzling distribution of SARS last year. They found that patients with severe cases of SARS were likely to have a version of the HLA gene called HLA-B 4601. They noted that no indigenous Taiwanese, who make up about 1.5 percent of the population, ever developed SARS. HLA-B 4601 is not seen among indigenous Taiwanese, they noted. [View Report](#)

## Heart Disease Worse Killer than Cancer, Women Told

26 September – Reuters reported the World Health Organization urged women to take better care of their hearts, warning that [cardiovascular diseases](#) like heart attacks and strokes kill far more women than breast cancer every year. Statistics compiled by the WHO from 21 countries show that of the 16.5 million who die each year of cardiovascular disease, more than half -- 8.6 million -- are women. Heart attacks and strokes kill twice as many women as all types of cancer combined. [View Article](#)

## Hepatitis A Booster 'Unnecessary'?

26 September – BBC News reported most people who have been vaccinated against [hepatitis A](#) do not need a booster shot, according to a report. A team of international scientists say the initial jabs are enough to give people protection for up to 25 years. While further research is needed, the findings

could change the way hepatitis A vaccine programs are run. Writing in The Lancet, the scientists said it could make vaccinating people in the developing world much more feasible. [View Article](#)

## Kissing 'Could Spread Hepatitis C'

28 September – BBC News reported the potentially fatal [hepatitis C virus](#) could be passed on by kissing or sharing toothbrushes, a study suggests. Researchers in the United States say they have found traces of the virus in the saliva of people with hepatitis C. They believe the saliva may be infectious and that people with the virus could pass it on to others. Speaking at the Interscience Conference on Antimicrobial Agents in Chicago, they said people with gum disease may be most at risk. [View Article](#)

## Prostate Exam Every 4 Years Misses Few Cancers

30 September – Reuters reported current guidelines from the American Cancer Society recommend that men over age 50 should be "offered" a prostate exam every year, but data from a European study suggest that a thorough screening for [prostate cancer](#) every four years may be adequate. The rate of occurrence of "interval cancers" -- new cancers that arise between screening visits -- is an "important parameter for determining the sensitivity of the screening procedure and the proper screening interval," study authors note. They determined the rate of interval cancers in over 17,000 men ages 55 to 74. About half the men underwent screening on two scheduled occasions four years apart. The other men -- the control group -- did not receive scheduled screening. The rate of interval cancers was "exceedingly low." All of the interval cancers were early stage tumors that had not spread beyond the prostate, suggesting to the team that "very few, if any, aggressive prostate cancers escape screening" with the 4-year interval. [View Report](#)

## Study Shows Link Between Antibiotics And Allergies, Asthma

01 October – Science Daily reported children who receive antibiotics within their first six months of birth increase their risk of developing by age 7 allergies to pets, ragweed, grass and dust mites and [asthma](#), according to study conducted at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit. However, they are less susceptible to these effects if they live with at least two pets, namely dogs or cats, in the first year. Researchers also say breast-feeding and a mother's history of allergies add to the risks of allergy for a child taking antibiotics. It is theorized that use of antibiotics may affect the gastrointestinal tract and alter the development of a child's immune system. [View Report](#)

## Syndromic Surveillance and Bioterrorism-related Epidemics

01 October – The October issue of the journal of Emerging Infectious Diseases published an article on [Syndromic Surveillance](#). To facilitate rapid detection of a future [bioterrorist attack](#), an increasing number of public health departments are investing in new surveillance systems that target the early manifestations of bioterrorism-related disease. Whether this approach is likely to detect an epidemic sooner than reporting by alert clinicians remains unknown. The detection of a bioterrorism-related epidemic will depend on population characteristics, availability and use of health services, the nature of an attack, epidemiologic features of individual diseases, surveillance methods, and the capacity of health departments to respond to alerts. [View Article](#)

## Vaccine Rates Overestimated

25 September – BBC News reported official data on global [vaccination](#) rates may exaggerate how many people are immunized against common diseases, say experts. A team from the World Health Organization examined data on the [diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis](#) vaccine. They found official coverage

rates were much higher than those recorded in house-to-house surveys. Writing in The Lancet, they warn effective public health programs depend on accurate data. The researchers examined vaccination records for 45 countries in the developing world between 1990 and 2000. They compared official data submitted by health centers and workers who give out vaccines, with that collected by researchers who asked individual people whether or not they had been vaccinated. Consistently, the household surveys showed that fewer people had been vaccinated than the numbers suggested by the official returns.

[View Article](#)

## USEUCOM

### Africa Needs More than AIDS Drugs

25 September – CBS News reported aid workers, pharmaceutical companies and donors have made drugs available to a small number of African [AIDS](#) patients, but as new programs take root, the lack of trained doctors and facilities are becoming the biggest barriers to care. A few years ago, activists protested the high price of anti-retroviral drugs and demanded deep discounts from pharmaceutical companies, or access to generic equivalents in Africa. Both patented and generic drugs have become available in some countries at affordable prices, and aid agencies and pharmaceutical companies have set up trial programs to find the best way to treat the 30 million Africans with HIV. The availability of drugs has dramatically increased the demand for treatment in countries that have experimental programs, but the main problem now is a shortage of clinics, trained doctors and pharmacists. [View Article](#)

### Aid Agency Warns Russia of Untreatable TB Epidemic

30 September - Reuters reported a leading medical aid agency warned Russia that it might face an epidemic of a new strain of untreatable [tuberculosis](#) if it did not change its methods of fighting the disease. Highly contagious TB, which attacks the lungs, is widespread in Russia's cramped prisons and is rapidly becoming immune to the drugs used to treat it, Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) said. The Russian Health Ministry has failed to approve a new World Health Organization-backed program that aims to stop the development of a strain of TB -- a disease that quickly forms defenses against drugs -- becoming resistant to all treatment. [View Article](#)

### Denmark: New Avian Influenza Virus A H5N7 Identified in Ducks

25 September – ProMed reported a new [influenza A](#) virus type, H5N7, has been identified for the first time in ducks in Denmark. Following disease among 12,000 ducks raised to be released for hunting at a duck farm near the town of Salling in Jutland, 2 viruses were identified: a Duck Virus Enteritis (DVE), which caused the disease, and an influenza A virus. All ducks had to be exterminated due to the disease. [View Report](#)

### Longer-Lasting Anti-Mosquito Bednets in Africa Could Save Millions of Lives - UN

26 September – AllAfrica.com reported two United Nations agencies today announced an international partnership that enables African countries to manufacture innovative anti-mosquito bednets that have the potential to save millions of lives on the continent where 90 per cent of the world's deaths from [malaria](#) occur. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UN World Health Organization (WHO) and the Acumen Fund said the transfer of the Japanese technology to an African manufacturer was made possible by an international public-private partnership aimed at greatly reducing malaria deaths. The

new technology extends the efficacy of insecticidal bednets from about one year to more than four years without being retreated. The "long-lasting insecticidal nets" are a powerful weapon for fighting malaria, which kills more than one million people annually, most of them children under the age of five, WHO said. [View Article](#)

## USCENTCOM

### Kazakhstan: Questions Remain about Waste Dumps in Mangistau

26 September – IRIN News reported waste dumps near the western Kazakh town of Aktau remain a source of environmental concern for local ecology officials and scientists. Hundreds of metric tons of various radioactive and toxic waste have been discharged into the 'Koshkar-Ata' repository since 1965, impacting the adjacent area and the health of local inhabitants. "The fine dust from the bare spots of the tailing are blown towards Aktau due to rising winds," Sarkyt Kudaibergenov, the deputy director of the Kaztransoil science-technology centre, told IRIN from Almaty, describing the situation as serious. "You can imagine the implications when the local people breathe this fine [radioactive] dust from the tailing, where there is the whole periodic table of elements, including uranium and other radioactive elements." [View Article](#)

### "Nodding Disease", Children, Southern Sudan

24 September – ProMed reported almost 300 children in a small region of southern Sudan have caught what may be the world's newest and oddest disease -- an illness so rare and mysterious that science has not yet come up with an official name for it. Children who suffer from this disease are gripped by a series of brain seizures, which force their neck to arch forwards, down, and then up again. Thus, people in community call it "nodding disease." Bizarrely, the seizures normally occur when the sufferers start to eat, or when it is particularly cold. The disease is fatal. The village of Amadi is now considered to be the epicenter of the disease -- 12 percent of children there are affected. During 2002, experts from the World Health Organization did neurological scans on some of the children, enabling them to confirm that this is a specific and unique condition. As of yet, doctors have not been able to figure out what is causing the disease. [View Report](#)

### Suspected Anisakiasis in Israel

30 September – ProMed reported a 31-year-old, previously healthy Israeli male patient developed on 17 Jun 2003, severe, sudden-onset, and prolonged abdominal symptoms (including abdominal pain and subsequently diarrhea) as well as extreme eosinophilia (80 percent of  $43.7 \times 10^3/\mu\text{cl}$  WBC's), 2 weeks after consuming salmon roe in Belgium and hours after ingesting a tuna sandwich in Israel. The patient works as a food engineer in a large fast-food international company, and eats only Kosher food. Liver function tests showed mild abnormalities. Using western blot, serological tests for [anisakiasis](#) were done. Though there were several bands with the patient's serum, the intensity of staining was weak. The serological result indicates the probability of anisakiasis, but the probability of cross-reaction by another species of nematode was not completely ruled out. [View Report](#)

## USNORTHCOM

### Anthrax, Food Poisons Still No. 1 Threats -Experts

25 September – The Washington Post reported [anthrax](#) is still the main biological threat facing the United States, and poisons put into the food supply run a very close second, officials said.

They said the United States remains vulnerable to a range of attacks but is moving to patch many holes. "I still believe that anthrax is the greatest threat agent that we have," said Jerome Hauer, an assistant secretary for Health and Emergency Response at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. "We don't have enough vaccine against anthrax at this time," he told a conference on weapons of mass destruction organized by consulting firm E.J. Krause & Associates. [View Article](#)

## Bedbugs Make a Comeback

29 September – CBS News reported once thought virtually eradicated in the United States, the [bedbug](#) is back. By the end of 2002, bedbugs had been reported in at least 28 states. And that could be just the start of a much larger problem. Some say an increase in international travel is to blame. Mike Lawton, a staff entomologist with Western Exterminator Co. in Irvine, Calif., said people from countries where bedbugs are rampant are staying in U.S. hotels and motels, bringing the insects with them. A majority of new cases reported in 2002 - 31 percent - were in hotels and motels. Of the remainder, 28 percent were in apartment complexes and dormitories; 25 percent were in single-family homes; and 16 percent were at other locations. [View Article](#)

## Boston, Texas Win Biodefense Lab Money

30 September – ABC News reported Boston University and the University of Texas won a national competition to build high-security laboratories to research deadly viruses as part of the Bush administration's campaign to broaden defenses against bioterrorism. The National Biocontainment Laboratories would house hundreds of scientists researching vaccines and handling deadly agents such as anthrax, plague, and smallpox. Each will receive a \$120 million federal grant for construction. The facilities will join three other operational laboratories in the country that carry the highest safety designation of Level 4, which is for handling agents that cause deadly diseases that have no cures, according to the NIH. The other top labs are at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, the Army's Fort Detrick in Maryland and the Southwest Foundation for Biomedical Research in San Antonio, Texas. Many of the lab's potential neighbors in Boston oppose the plan. "We still think this is the wrong place for such a facility and will be continuing to work on all fronts to try to stop the facility from being built, including pursuing the legal track," said Penn Loh, executive director of Alternatives for the Community and Environment. [View Article](#)

## Dietary Guidelines Spur Debate

26 September – MSNBC News reported several experts updating the nation's benchmarks for good eating habits plan to aim their "eat well, exercise regularly" message at healthy consumers, rejecting the government's suggestion they direct their diet advice to overweight Americans. The Agriculture Department warned that if it continues to gear the [food] pyramid to healthy people, it 'could promote consumption at a level that would increase weight or maintain weight above what is healthy.' The panel acknowledges that obesity is a problem, since 64 percent of adults and 13 percent of children are overweight, but some members doubt they should offer advice on losing weight through guidelines meant to help all consumers improve the way they eat. [View Article](#)

## Florida: Shigella Outbreak Strikes Bay Area

29 September – ProMed reported the worst outbreak of [Shigella](#) in 9 years is prompting Escambia County health officials to warn the public about the highly contagious disease that can be dangerous to children. In August and September 2003, officials confirmed 104 cases of the diarrheal infection in 11 elementary schools and 14 day-care facilities. The outbreak is the worst since 1994, when 446 people in Escambia County were stricken, prompting federal intervention from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta. Health officials have been unable to isolate the source of this year's

outbreak. In 1995, shigella-related illnesses suffered by 29 Santa Rosa County residents were linked to a single day-care center. [View Report](#)

## Hospitals Still Unprepared for SARS

26 September – MSNBC News reported health care experts say the government’s soon-to-be-released hospital guidelines on how to prevent the spread of [SARS](#) don’t go far enough in preparing for a possible U.S. outbreak. Many hospitals don’t have the space for isolation wards for numerous SARS patients, state health officials say. There still is no accurate test for rapidly diagnosing SARS. Systems for quarantines are not set up. ‘If SARS returns in the midst of flu season ... it’s going to be even harder than it was last time to determine who has SARS and who doesn’t.’ [View Article](#)

## Louisiana: St Louis Encephalitis Cases

25 September – ProMed reported 4 Livingston Parish residents and a Baton Rouge man have been diagnosed with mosquito-borne [St. Louis encephalitis virus](#) infection. One of those Livingston Parish cases, a 64-year-old man, has died from St. Louis encephalitis. His case apparently was listed previously as a [West Nile virus](#) case. The 2 diseases give similar results in preliminary screenings. State Epidemiologist Dr. Raoult Ratard said he expects the St. Louis encephalitis cases to remain small in number since the encephalitis season should end in about 5 weeks. Mosquitoes carrying St. Louis encephalitis virus have been found in surveillance traps in 5 locations in East Baton Rouge since the beginning of August 2003. [View Report](#)

## Mexico: Alert Due to Outbreak of Conjunctivitis, Expanded to Include the State of Jalisco

24 September – ProMed reported the epidemiological alert issued as a result of the outbreaks of [conjunctivitis](#) in Mexico was expanded to include the state of Jalisco, where authorities confirmed that 595 people have been infected. These cases are in addition to the 9,000 people affected by the condition registered last week. However, official sources from the state of Tabasco have stated that there is an underreporting of cases and that the total could reach 24,000. Alfonso Petersen, health secretary for Jalisco, noted that the most affected groups are people between 25 and 44 years of age (32.5 percent of the cases) and those between 10 and 14 years of age (20.6 percent of the cases). Petersen insisted that the outbreak has not been controlled, that there has been an important increase in the number of cases over the past few days, and that there is a risk for the propagation of the disease. The state health secretary announced that the National Public Health Laboratory is studying 25 culture samples to identify the agents directly involved in this infectious outbreak. [View Report](#)

## Minerals Worth Their Salt to Curb Hypertension

26 September —ABC News reported a new study finds that while salt may boost blood pressure, this effect appears to be worsened by meager intake of calcium, potassium, magnesium and other beneficial nutrients. The researchers looked at diet and [high blood pressure](#) in tens of thousands of Americans participating in a series of national health and nutrition surveys between 1980 and 2000. In the surveys, sodium intake didn’t have a major impact on blood pressure — though calcium consumption drove it down. People who reported eating more calcium, potassium and magnesium tended to have lower blood pressure than those who ate less of these nutrients. When salt does have an impact on blood pressure, the researchers say, it appears to reflect poor intake of the other nutrients. The findings were reported Sept. 25 at a meeting of the American Heart Association in Washington, D.C. [View Article](#)

## New Brunswick: 7 Potential Neurosurgery-related Creutzfeldt-Jakob Cases

26 September - New Brunswick health officials have warned 7 former hospital patients they may have contracted [Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease \(CJD\)](#) during neurosurgery in Moncton, New Brunswick, following the death of a woman during summer 2003 from this rare but fatal brain-wasting illness. The woman died on 31 Jul 2003, about 6 weeks after undergoing neurosurgery at Moncton Hospital, where doctors noticed she was showing symptoms of the disease. On Monday, autopsy results of her brain tissue confirmed she died of classical CJD. Officials cannot rule out the possibility that she may have been infected during a brain tissue transplant on her spinal cord in 1992, when doctors implanted a tissue graft taken from the brains of human cadavers, a procedure subsequently banned due to concerns that it could transmit CJD. The woman returned to hospital for a 2nd operation in June 2003 and died shortly afterwards. The instruments used in her operation have since been incinerated, but of the 7 patients warned in the wake of the woman's death, 2 may have been exposed to those instruments before the instruments were destroyed. 5 others received similar brain tissue transplants in the early 1990s. [View Report](#)

## New Mexico: Albuquerque *Salmonella* Cases May Relate to Beef Jerky

30 September – ProMed reported a health protection advisory was issued by the city on Friday when several cases of [Salmonella](#) were confirmed and possibly linked to beef jerky. City Environmental Health Department Director Alfredo Robert Santistevan said beef jerky products produced at a city-inspected facility may have caused the cases of the rare form of the illness. Tests are still pending, and no particular brand of the beef jerky products has been identified. The facility was immediately closed and its permit was suspended, Santistevan said. The state Health Department has identified 21 cases of *Salmonella kiambu*. 14 of those people said they ate beef jerky. The department's Office of Epidemiology, the state Environment Department and the city are working together to investigate the cases. [View Report](#)

## North Carolina: Hepatitis Scare May Be Part of Multi-state Outbreak

30 September – ProMed reported state and federal health officials are concerned the cases of [hepatitis A](#) virus infection in Buncombe County could be part of a multi-state outbreak. Dr. Jeff Ingle, head of the Communicable Disease Control Program for the North Carolina Division of Public Health, said hepatitis outbreaks also have occurred in Tennessee and Georgia, and officials are investigating whether affected restaurants (Doc Chey's Noodle House and Laughing Seed Café) had common food suppliers. "The other connection could be with these multi-day camp-out rock festivals," Ingle said. "Food preparation is largely unregulated and the sanitation can be less than ideal." The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have issued a warning about the outdoor festivals featuring various "jam bands." [Information on the CDC Web site](#) says 26 cases of hepatitis A virus infection have been reported among residents of 10 states. Officials also are concerned about diners who don't live in the area and may not know they've been exposed. Alerts have gone out to every state department of health, Ingle said, but it's impossible to reach everyone. [View Report](#)

## Oregon: First St. Louis Encephalitis Case in 30 Years

30 September – ProMed reported public health officials at the Oregon State Department of Human Services (DHS) said today that a case of [St. Louis encephalitis](#) has occurred in Oregon, the first in more than 30 years. Test results from the state's public health laboratory confirm that a Jefferson County resident was infected in late August 2003. He received medical treatment and is recovering. Between 1964 and 1998, there were 4478 confirmed cases of St. Louis encephalitis in the United States and only two of those cases were in Oregon, according to CDC data. [View Report](#)

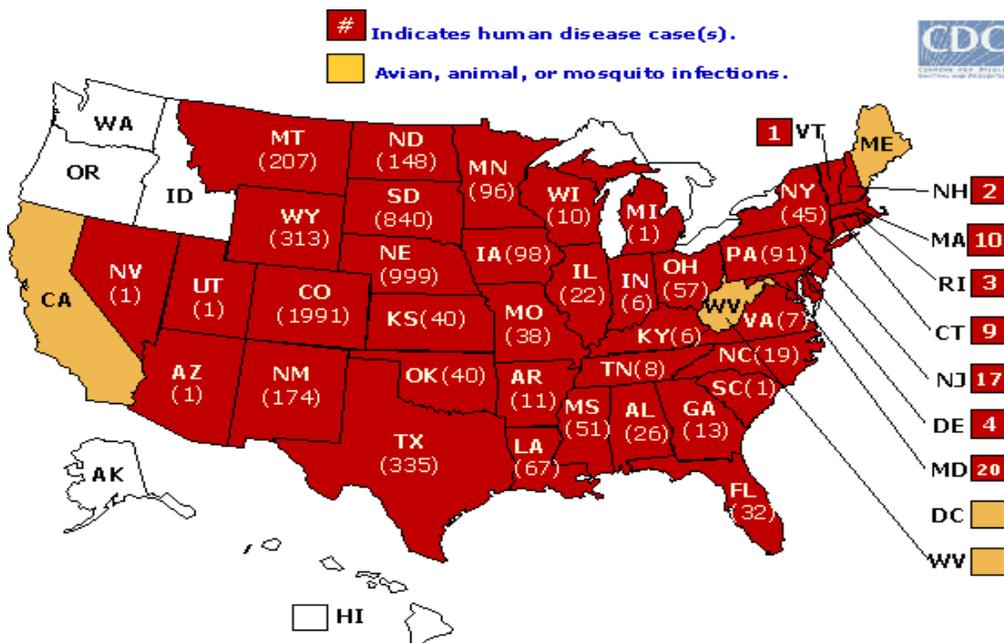
## Source Unclear for Florida Malaria Outbreak

26 September – Reuters reported an outbreak of [malaria](#) in Florida this past summer is the first US outbreak since 1986 to have started with just one person, a new report indicates. Strangely, this patient had no risk factors for the disease. While most cases of malaria in the US are imported, locally acquired cases continue to occur, the authors note in the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. [View Article](#)  
[View MMWR Report](#)

## Virginia: 1st Fatal Human Case of Eastern Equine Encephalitis in 2003

29 September – ProMed reported a Gloucester County man in his 70s has died from [eastern equine encephalitis \(EEE\)](#), the 1st death of the year from a mosquito-borne disease in Virginia, state health officials said. The man contracted the disease on 26 Aug 2003 and died on 16 Sep 2003. The death is the only human EEE case reported so far in 2003 in Virginia. In Virginia, there have been 7 cases of EEE in horses in 2003, according to the state Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Those cases were in Suffolk, Chesapeake, and the counties of Halifax, Madison, Pittsylvania, and Powhatan. An infected horse indicates that mosquitoes carrying the disease are nearby and may threaten human health. There was also a group of 8 emus in Stafford County that died, one of which was diagnosed with EEE. Health officials said it is likely that the other 7, which were not tested, died of the same disease. State officials are preparing for what could be a significant increase in the mosquito population due to standing floodwaters and surges from Hurricane Isabel. [View Report](#)

## West Nile Virus in the United States as of 1 October, 2003



## USPACOM

### Crime Suspected as 222 Chinese Children Hospitalized with Food Poisoning

27 September – USDA reported state media and officials were cited as saying Saturday that police in the central Chinese province of Hunan are investigating the sudden illness of 222 school children hospitalized after eating food contaminated with rat poison. The children, from a school near the city of Yueyang, were hospitalized after several of them started vomiting and showing other signs of food

poisoning on Tuesday, the Chongqing Morning Post reported. Sixteen of the children are in serious condition, and five of them are considered critical, a Yueyang county official surnamed Peng told AFP. Suspicions of a criminal act were strengthened after laboratory tests showed the breakfast the children ate on the day of the mass outbreak contained rat poison, the paper said. [View Article](#)

## India: Cysticercosis Behind Increase in Seizures and Epilepsies

29 September – ProMed reported a disease is ringing alarm bells in most of northern India. Battling increasing cases of [neurocysticercosis](#), doctors are now releasing figures that signal the beginning of an epidemic: 13 percent of the epilepsy cases coming to Delhi's hospitals are being triggered by cyst formation in vulnerable areas of the human brain. Previously, it was the consumption of pork that was considered the trigger for cysts. But now it seems the tapeworm that causes the cyst can also enter the body through leafy vegetables like cabbage and spinach. These are new tapeworm carriers, as these are increasingly grown in unhygienic conditions. Apart from the brain, cysts can affect muscles, skin, lungs, liver, and other parts. Doctors say the disease is spreading rapidly due to unhygienic food. [View Report](#)

## India (Gujarat): Undiagnosed Neurologic Illness

29 September – ProMed reported in the last 2 weeks, 6 cases of a disease bearing a close resemblance to [diphtheria](#) surfaced from Surendranagar, among which one patient died. State health department officials are not sure of the mysterious ailment that is reported to have gripped Chandragadh village of Surendranagar recently. At the V.S. Hospital in Ahmedabad, 6 patients were admitted with symptoms of 'atypical diphtheria' that may have led to either Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS) or Acute Flaccid Paralysis (AFP), an infection to which one patient succumbed recently. Head of the pediatrics department in V.S. hospital, Rajesh Joshi, admitted they had received a few cases of what appeared to be either GBS or AFP, suspected as due to viral [or] bacterial infections. State health commissioner V.A. Sathe confirmed that 6 cases of 'atypical diphtheria' have shown symptoms of GBS or AFP in patients at V.S. Hospital. They are from Chandragadh in Halvad taluka. Health officials have conducted a house-to-house survey to ascertain whether there are any more cases. [View Report](#)

## USPACOM Dengue Fever Update

29 September – ProMed reported on the following [Dengue Fever](#) updates. There is a growing number of dengue cases in New Delhi, India, about 130 so far. Officials of the Delhi government's health department and the MCD blame this year's heavy rainfall for the spurt in dengue cases. Only one person has died thus far, but the number of cases so far is almost thrice that of last year [2002]. In Maharashtra, India, the Pune municipal corporation on Thursday appealed to all the citizens take necessary precautions against dengue fever. Apart from 3 deaths in the city (including one patient from Bhor in Pune district), 14 other victims of dengue fever were reported to be in serious condition in the city hospitals. In Indonesia, 14 people have died of dengue fever in North Sumatra, a provincial health official said. Head of the North Sumatra Health Office, Dr. Hj. Fatni Sulani, stated the ill-fated victims were part of a total of 344 people affected by the sometimes fatal disease this year. In Medan city alone, 220 people contracted the disease, Dr. Fatni Sulani said. Dengue fever is also rife in certain parts of the towns of Binjai, Deli Serdang and Langkat, Fatni said. [View Report](#)

## Hong Kong to Use HIV Drug to Treat SARS Victims

25 September – Reuters reported Hong Kong hospitals will use the HIV drug Kaletra together with ribavirin to treat [SARS](#) patients if the territory is hit by a second wave of the deadly disease, its hospital chief said. Experts have warned that the disease could return during the winter months and countries in the region are arming themselves with drugs and elaborate contingency plans for what may be another onslaught of the disease. Hospital Authority chief William Ho said an analysis of the treatments given to

all SARS patients in Hong Kong showed that a small group given both Kaletra and ribavirin had a significantly lower death rate than those given only ribavirin. [View Article](#)

## India (Himachal): Scrub Typhus Claims 19

24 September – ProMed reported yesterday, the unidentified disease associated with the onset of monsoon season had been identified as [scrub typhus](#), a form of [rickettsial disease](#) which is transmitted by mites. Though the mystery behind the mystery fever has now been unraveled, it continues to grip pockets of half of the 12 districts of Himachal Pradesh and has claimed 19 lives this year, adding up to 36 in the past 3 years. While more than 225 people have been admitted to various hospitals, there is no count of those being treated by private doctors. The first symptoms of the high-grade fever were noticed in July 2001, and experts were at a loss to explain what it was, how it was caused, or its diagnoses. Experts from the National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD), New Delhi, also kept visiting Shimla and took blood samples but failed to identify the disease. The disease strikes each year during the monsoon, and it has been observed that heavier the rains, the higher the incidence of disease. [View Report](#)

## USSOUTHCOM

### South America: Yellow Fever Update

28 September – ProMed reported the most current [Yellow Fever](#) Statistics for South America. These statistics represent disease counts through 10 September, 2003. Colombia – 88 cases, 40 deaths. Peru – 21 cases, 12 deaths. Venezuela - 13 cases, 9 deaths. [View Report](#)

### USSOUTHCOM: Dengue Fever Update

29 September – ProMed reported on the following [Dengue Fever](#) updates. In Brazil, as of epidemiological week 34/2003, 271,161 cases of dengue have been notified, 259,800 of them in the first 6 months, a reduction of 65 percent compared with the first 6 months of 2002. So far 7,487 cases have been notified for July and August 2003, but 13 states have only very preliminary figures. Currently dengue virus serotypes 1, 2, and 3 are active in 22 states [including the Federal District]. 575 cases of dengue hemorrhagic fever (DHF) have been confirmed in 20 states. This represents only 21 percent of the total DHF cases in 2002. States with the largest numbers of DHF cases are Ceara, Amazonas, and Espirito Santo. The dengue death rate for the whole country currently stands at about 6.4 percent. In Colombia, 13 confirmed and 52 suspected cases of DHF and 135 cases of classic dengue fever have been reported so far in 2003. During 2002, 82 cases of DHF and 64 cases of classic dengue fever were reported. In September 2002 only 3 cases of DHF were diagnosed, but so far this month, 10 cases have already been reported. The number of cases is growing and the hospital expects a worsening of the situation during the remainder of 2003 because of the seasonal nature of the disease. In Panama, The Epidemiological Surveillance report for Chiriqui province for the week 14-20 Sep 2003 lists 278 new cases of dengue, for a total of 22,639 cases. In 2002 for the same period the total was 21,577. Anti-mosquito spraying will be carried out next week in San Mateo, Manuel Quintero V, and Doleguita. [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/Hiupdate/>.

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