

**USACHPPM**  
**HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE**

25 October 2002

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

### Cleaner Air 'Cuts Deaths'

17 October – [BBC](#) News reported on two studies where cutting pollution reduces deaths from heart and lung disease. Both studies looked at how the environment affected people's health. An Irish study found death rates in Dublin from heart and lung diseases fell dramatically after the 1990 coal ban. A Dutch study found people were twice as likely to die from such illnesses if they lived near a main road. Environmental campaigners said the research supported their calls to cut pollution from all sources. [View Article](#)

### Close Monitoring Is Planned for Smallpox Vaccinations

17 October—The New York Times reported Federal health officials said that a network of experts would be made available for consultation at any hour in case of bad reactions to smallpox vaccine, which may be given soon to a half-million hospital workers. The network would be part of the most comprehensive system ever to monitor the safety of a vaccine, officials of the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said. It would also be the first formal program in which doctors treating a patient with a vaccination complication could immediately consult with designated experts at selected medical centers around the country. Such consultations have been done informally, with the disease centers relying on reports from doctors that were not collected in a standard way. An estimated 35 percent, or 175,000, of the recipients are expected to call the hotline, where the staff will provide advice and refer those needing immediate care to their doctors. [View Article](#)

### Disease Occurrence -- Worldwide

16 October – [AFMIC](#) has published this week's Disease Occurrence Worldwide (DOWW). The weekly DOWW provides timely alerts and updates on militarily significant infectious diseases. The in-depth report can be viewed at <https://mic.afmic.detrick.army.mil> under "What's new."

## Hepatitis Cases May Be Linked to Needles at Clinic

17 October – The New York Times reported at least 10 cancer patients treated at a Nebraska clinic have contracted hepatitis C, possibly because of hypodermic needle reuse there, and the number of those infected could rise, according to a state health official. Dr. Thomas Safranek, the state epidemiologist for the Nebraska Health and Human Services System, said health officials believed that another 10 people might have become infected with the virus at the clinic. He said health officials had yet to determine a cause for the outbreak. But he said they were looking at the possibilities that someone at the clinic might have used the same contaminated needle and syringe to treat multiple patients or that needle reuse had caused a vial of medication to become contaminated by the hepatitis C virus. [View Article](#)

## Hormone Replacement Therapy for Primary Prevention of Chronic Conditions

15 October – The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) has published the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommendations for use of hormone replacement therapy (HRT) for the primary prevention of chronic conditions in postmenopausal women. The USPSTF found fair-to-good evidence that the combination of estrogen and progestin has both benefits and harms. Benefits include increased bone mineral density, reduced risk for fracture, and reduced risk for colorectal cancer. Harms include increased risk for breast cancer, venous thromboembolism, coronary heart disease (CHD), stroke, and cholecystitis. The USPSTF concluded that the harmful effects of estrogen and progestin are likely to exceed the chronic disease prevention benefits in most women. The USPSTF recommendations and individual reports on hormone replacement therapy and specific disease outcomes are available on the USPSTF Web site (<http://www.preventiveservices.ahrq.gov>) and through the National Guideline Clearinghouse™ (<http://www.guideline.gov>). [View Original Report](#)

## Long Hours Behind Wheel Don't Damage Spine: Study

16 October - Reuters Health reported road trips can take a toll on the back, but a new study suggests that even years of professional driving may not speed permanent degeneration in the spine. Disc degeneration occurs normally with aging, but the thought has been that occupational driving may accelerate this process, the new study's lead author, Dr. Michele C. Battie, explained. But in her team's study of male twins--in which one twin had logged years of professional driving--there was "not the slightest" sign that the occupation was related to greater disc degeneration, Battie said. The results should be "good news" to professional drivers, according to Battie. [View Article](#)

## Primary Prevention of Hypertension: Clinical and Public Health Advisory From the National High Blood Pressure Education Program

6 October - The National High Blood Pressure Education Program Coordinating Committee published its first statement on the primary prevention of hypertension in 1993. This article updates the 1993 report, using new and further evidence from the scientific literature. Current recommendations for primary prevention of hypertension involve a population-based approach and an intensive targeted strategy focused on individuals at high risk for hypertension. These 2 strategies are complementary and emphasize 6 approaches with proven efficacy for prevention

of hypertension: engage in moderate physical activity; maintain normal body weight; limit alcohol consumption; reduce sodium intake; maintain adequate intake of potassium; and consume a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and low-fat dairy products and reduced in saturated and total fat. Applying these approaches to the general population as a component of public health and clinical practice can help prevent blood pressure from increasing and can help decrease elevated blood pressure levels for those with high normal blood pressure or hypertension. [View Report](#)

## Prion diseases' deadly action revealed

17 October- Newscientist.com reported the likely cause of cell death in brains infected with prion diseases has been revealed for the first time, say US researchers. The diseases, which include mad cow disease and its human form vCJD, are currently untreatable. But the understanding of their molecular mechanics could lead to therapies. The brains of prion disease victims are full of empty spaces where healthy neurons once thrived. They are also clogged with clumps of prion protein (PrP) in a misfolded form called PrP<sup>Sc</sup>. PrP<sup>Sc</sup> is thought to be the infectious agent, but not the cell killer. A newly manufactured prion travels to the cell's membrane, to be expressed on the surface. Occasionally, these prions are misfolded during manufacture. If this happens, a natural set of "garbage disposal" enzymes called proteasomes move in to destroy the mutants. But researchers have found that infection with PrP<sup>Sc</sup>s seems to somehow overwhelm this quality control machinery. Once this has happened, different misfolded prions can accumulate in the cell and kill it, even at very low levels. The findings suggest that if proteasome-stimulating drugs could be developed, they might form an effective treatment. [View Article](#)

## Screening Tests To Detect *Chlamydia trachomatis* and *Neisseria gonorrhoea* Infections

18 October – The CDC has updated the 1993 guidelines for selecting laboratory tests for *C. trachomatis* with an emphasis on screening men and women in the United States. In addition, these guidelines consider tests from an economic perspective and expand the previous guidelines to address detection of *N. gonorrhoea* as well as *C. trachomatis* infections. Because of the increased cost of nucleic acid amplification tests (NAATs), certain laboratories are modifying manufacturers' procedures to improve test sensitivity without incurring the full cost associated with screening with a NAAT. This report also addresses the need for additional testing after a positive screening test to improve the specificity of a final diagnosis. [View Article](#)

## Short-Course Rifampin and Pyrazinamide Compared with Isoniazid for Latent Tuberculosis Infection: A Multicenter Clinical Trial

15 October – A study reported in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* suggests rifampin and pyrazinamide are recommended for treatment of latent tuberculosis infection in adults without HIV infection, but reports of severe hepatotoxicity have raised concerns about its safety. The objective of this study was to compare the safety and tolerance of a 2-month regimen of rifampin and pyrazinamide with that of a 6-month regimen of isoniazid for treatment of latent tuberculosis infection. The multicenter, prospective, open-label trial took place in 3 urban public health tuberculosis clinics in the United States. Subjects with latent tuberculosis infection were assigned in alternate weeks to receive rifampin and pyrazinamide daily for 2 months (n = 307) or isoniazid daily for 6 months (n = 282). The study concluded a 2-month regimen of rifampin

and pyrazinamide was associated with an increased risk for grade 3 or 4 hepatotoxicity compared with a 6-month regimen of isoniazid. [View Article](#)

## Syphilis at All-Time Low in U.S.

18 October — ABC News reported quick responses to outbreaks, bolstered by a public-awareness push the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention began in 1998, are likely to put Syphilis on the endangered list nationwide by 2005, the CDC says. After peaking at 20.3 cases per 100,000 people in 1990, the U.S. rate bottomed out at 2.2 cases per 100,000 people in 2000 the lowest since the government started tracking the disease in 1941. The CDC believes that number could drop to 0.4 cases per 100,000 or 4 in 1 million by 2005 with continued education and vigilance, said spokeswoman Jessica Frickey. [View Article](#)

## Troops say anthrax vaccine was reason they left military service

22 October — [MSNBC](#) News reported highly trained and experienced pilots and crews in the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve are leaving or have left military service in part because of the Pentagon's anthrax vaccine, congressional investigators say in a report released 22 October. Randomly selected guard and reserve troops surveyed in 2000 by the General Accounting Office (GAO) also reported adverse reactions to the vaccine at double the rate claimed by the manufacturer, BioPort Corp., the GAO said. The GAO recommended that Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld require a surveillance program to monitor problems with the vaccine. In a response included with the report, the Defense Department disagreed with the GAO's recommendation and some of its findings. Reginald J. Brown, assistant secretary of the Army, cited a National Academy of Sciences report that concluded there was no data that pointed to the need for a monitoring program. Brown also said the GAO's findings on rates of separation by pilots were not supported by data from the Defense Manpower Data Center and the GAO did not consider normal turnover rates. [View Article](#) [View GAO Report](#)

## WHO Issues 'Tobacco Atlas' Reviewing Global Smoking Habits

15 October - [VOA](#) News reports the World Health Organization has released a "Tobacco Atlas" that presents a visual view of a habit that claims the lives of more than 13,000 people every day around the world. Officials at the World Health Organization have high hopes for the "Tobacco Atlas." They describe it as the first of its kind in the health field, and say it will give ordinary people and policymakers an idea of the toll tobacco is taking on millions worldwide. Using colorful maps and graphics, the atlas shows the damage caused by tobacco, from its effects on individual health to what countries have to pay to fight tobacco smuggling. Judith Mackay, the author of the atlas, says it is in developing countries, especially those in Asia, that tobacco is doing the most damage. Dr. Mackay says policymakers should find the atlas helpful as they try to formulate regulations on tobacco control during negotiations currently under way in Geneva on a tobacco treaty. The treaty is expected to be adopted by the World Health Organization's 192-member states by May of next year. The World Health Organization says if control measures are not put in place, it expects tobacco to kill an estimated 8.5 million people a year by 2020. [View Article](#)

## Weight loss controls blood pressure: Study

22 October – The Times of India reported new research has shown for the first time that weight loss decreases ACE enzyme that helps to control blood pressure. Researchers found that in addition to significant decreases in blood pressure, angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) activity was suppressed most dramatically with weight loss. The study, published in *Obesity Research*, confirmed that less body weight translates into lower blood pressure and hence, lower risks for cardiovascular disease, stroke, kidney disease and other health problems. [View Article](#)

## Women with Average Risk Should Begin Colorectal Cancer Screening at Age 50

21 October – Medscape reported even though it has been suggested that women may develop adenomas and colorectal cancer at an older age than men, researchers advised Sunday at the American College of Gastroenterology's annual meeting that women should not begin screening at a later age than men. The current guidelines recommend screening to begin at age 50 in an average-risk person. Lead author Dr. Brooks D. Cash, and his colleagues reviewed data from 1328 average-risk women who underwent colonoscopy for colorectal cancer screening. There were no statistically significant differences in adenoma prevalence based on age. Adenoma prevalence does increase as a person ages, Dr. Cash added, "but at least at the baseline prevalence there's no statistically significant difference. So our conclusion is that we should stick with age 50 as our starting point." [View Original Article](#)

## USEUCOM

### Angola – Customs and Processing Charges Holding Food Aid

17 October - [IRIN](#) News reported desperately needed emergency food aid has been sitting in Angolan ports because the government has not paid the customs and processing charges. The World Food Program (WFP) confirmed the situation when approached by IRIN for comment. With WFP stocks quickly running out, the organization will be left with no choice but to cut rations of pulses - beans, lentils and peas - to the 1.8 million desperate Angolans it plans to feed this month. WFP was also concerned that shipments of food aid due to arrive this month could also be held up at the ports. The relief food is stranded at three ports - Lobito, Launda and Namibe - and some of the consignments had been sitting there since the beginning of September. [View Article](#)

### Environmental Health Risk Assessment: Mauritania

15 October - [AFMIC](#) issued an environmental health risk assessment on Mauritania. The in-depth report can be viewed at <https://mic.afmic.detrick.army.mil> under "What's new."

## Moscow Hospital Visit Shows Russian Children in Poor Health

17 October - Russia is conducting an ambitious campaign to assess the country's child health-care crisis. By mid-December, the government plans to have examined all of the country's 33.5 million children in an effort to improve the health-care system. A visit to the Russian Children's Clinical Hospital in Moscow shows how the campaign is progressing. [View Article](#)

## UK Warns About Salmonella in Eggs After One Death

16 October – Reuters reported Britain is warning food businesses about salmonella in eggs after recent outbreaks of an unusual strain of the bacteria that led to the death of one person. Over 150 people have become ill with the Enteritidis PT 14b strain of salmonella since early September in the southeast and northwest of England, with one person dying over the weekend, the Food Standards Agency said in a statement late Tuesday. The FSA reminded food businesses to use pasteurized eggs in products that are ready to eat or only lightly cooked before eating. It said efforts to identify the source of the outbreaks centered on the London and Cheshire areas. [View Article](#)

## Yellow Fever in Senegal

18 October - The World Health Organization Communicable Disease Surveillance and Response (WHO-CSR) reported as of 17 October, the Ministry of Health of Senegal has confirmed 18 cases of and 2 deaths from yellow fever. The outbreak has affected Touba, Mbacké and Bambey départements, Diourbel region and Gossas département, Fatick region. Laboratory confirmation was made by the WHO Collaborating Center at the Institut Pasteur in Dakar. Fifteen of the cases were reported from Touba. Campaigns for vaccinations, insecticide spraying and increased surveillance have been implemented. [View Article](#)

## USCENTCOM

### Ethiopia: Concern Over Number of Children Dying Before Five

6 October – IRIN reported half a million children under the age of five die each year in Ethiopia because of illnesses such as malaria and measles, as well as pneumonia, diarrhea, and malnutrition. Deputy Health Minister Dr Demissie Tadesse said three out of four children taken to a health center suffered from at least one of the illnesses. Speaking at a conference on the Integrated Management of Childhood Diseases (IMCI), he said that in Ethiopia around 140 children out of every 1,000 would die before reaching their fifth birthday. “More than 70 percent of these child deaths are due to five diseases namely pneumonia, diarrhea, malaria, measles and malnutrition and often to a combination of these conditions and HIV/AIDS,” he said. Demissie added that the IMCI offered an effective way to tackle the illnesses that children suffered from in Ethiopia, while at the same time improving the overall healthcare of the country. [View Article](#)

## Afghanistan: Focus on landmine education for children

22 October - United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) reported as hundreds of thousands of refugees return to areas of Afghanistan that were once battlefields, one of the most important and life-saving programs in the country today is landmine education, particularly for children. Afghanistan is the most heavily mined country in the world. The former front-line areas in the northern and central regions contain the greatest concentrations of landmines. A landmine-education program being operated by Save the Children-US (SCF-US) in Kabul is reaching out to thousands of children. Established in 1996, its aim is to educate young people on what the devices look like and stop them from handling these if they come into contact with them. Up to 10 children take part in sessions held at schools, where NGO trainers or teachers use charts, pictures and board and memory games to show youngsters what to avoid. The children also take part in a play where they have to make decisions on what to do if they see a landmine or pieces of UXO. [View Article](#)

## USJFCOM

### CDC Announces Issuance of Patent for Detecting the Presence of Lead

17 October - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced the issuance of a patent for a hand wipe that can quickly and easily detect the presence of lead on skin, the steering wheels of vehicles used in metal industries, and surfaces such as tables, floors, walls and window sills. "This invention is important because it can help protect workers from lead poisoning," says Andrew Watkins, director, CDC's technology transfer office. "The hand wipe can test a variety of surfaces and indicates the presence of lead through a simple color change. This would alert a worker that there is some level of lead contamination and that he or she should perform more thorough hand washing." Although hand washing, if done carefully, can remove all lead residues, it is difficult for individuals to determine whether hand washing has been thorough enough. Lead exposure is a significant environmental hazard, which can affect large and diverse segments of the population. [View Article](#)

### CDC Details Florida Case of Human 'Mad Cow' Disease

17 October – Reuters Health reported a 22-year-old Florida resident is ill from variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD), the human version of "mad cow" disease, which she probably contracted during her childhood spent in Britain, according to US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) researchers. The case, first reported in April, is the first case of vCJD in a US resident, study author Dr. Ermias Belay of the CDC told Reuters Health. Other US residents have been diagnosed with the more common "classic" form of CJD, he said, which occurs spontaneously and usually in older adults. This form of CJD is unrelated to the consumption of meat infected with bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) or mad cow disease, which is thought to be the cause of vCJD. [View Article](#)

### Fire Prevention Week!

Throughout the month of October, Fire Prevention Week (FPW) activities are going on in communities all across North America. This year's FPW campaign touches on three simple but essential safety lessons that everyone can learn: Installing and testing smoke alarms, practicing home escape plans and hunting for home hazards. The Fire Service Campaign Toolkit from the National Fire Prevention Association includes resources to help make Fire Prevention Week a success. [Links to Fire Service Campaign Toolkit](#)

## Increase in Autism Baffles Scientists

18 October – The New York Times reported on a California study that found a drastic rise in childhood autism cannot be explained by statistical anomalies or by a growing public awareness that might have led more parents to report the disorder. As diagnoses of autism have increased throughout the nation, experts and parents have looked for possible explanations, including genetics, birth injuries and childhood immunizations. The California study found that none of these factors could explain an increase of the magnitude reported there — more than triple from 1987 to 1998. [View Article](#)

## NIH Releases Annual Bibliography of Significant Advances in Dietary Supplement Research

16 October - The Office of Dietary Supplements (ODS) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) announced the release of the third issue of the Annual Bibliography of Significant Advances in Dietary Supplement Research. Developed as a joint effort of ODS and the Consumer Healthcare Products Association (CHPA), this publication presents significant research in the dietary supplement field for the year 2001. The articles for the 2001 bibliography included research in the following areas: Water-soluble vitamins; Fat-soluble vitamins; Minerals; Fiber and soy; Amino acids and fatty acids; Botanicals; and Other dietary supplements, such as caffeine, glucosamine and melatonin. Copies of the third Annual Bibliography of Significant Advances in Dietary Supplement Research may be downloaded from the ODS website at <http://ods.od.nih.gov/publications/publications.html> [View Article](#)

## NRC Announces Availability of Guidance on Licenses for Medical Uses of Radioactive Material

22 October - The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is making available final guidance for obtaining a license, under newly revised regulations, to use radioactive materials in medical diagnosis, treatment and research. The document, "Consolidated Guidance About Materials Licenses: Program-Specific Guidance About Medical Use Licenses" (NUREG-1556, Volume 9), is a result of significant staff effort and public review, including several public workshops. A summary of public comments on the guidance and NRC responses will be published as a separate document, Appendix BB to NUREG-1556, Volume 9. The comments and responses will also be available in electronic form on CD-rom. A copy of NUREG-1556, Volume 9 and Appendix BB - on paper or CD-rom - may be requested in writing to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, ATTN: Mrs. Carrie Brown, Mail Stop T 9-C24, Washington, DC 20555-0001; by email at [CXB@nrc.gov](mailto:CXB@nrc.gov); or by telephone at 301-415-8092. These documents will also be available on the NRC's web site at <http://www.nrc.gov/materials/miau/miau-reg-initiatives/by-product.html>. [View Report](#)

## Nursing Shortage Can Have Deadly Consequences

22 October – Health Scout News reported on a new study that shows surgery patients whose nurses are overworked are more likely to die of post-operative complications. The study shows the risk of dying after surgery jumps 14 percent when a patient's nurse has six beds to cover instead of four. It soars by more than 30 percent if the nurse is responsible for eight beds. This research is important because U.S. hospital officials estimate that more than 94,000 nursing positions were vacant in 2001. If current nursing school enrollment trends and workplace attrition patterns don't improve, the shortfall is projected to hit 400,000 by 2020 -- or about 20 percent of the nation's total nursing force. According to Janice Weber, a public policy specialist for the American Association of Critical Care Nurses correcting patient ratios was only one of several steps necessary to reform America's nursing problem, and it won't solve the issues of attrition and poor morale. For more on the nursing shortage, try the [American Association of Colleges of Nursing](#) or the [American Nurses Association](#). [View Article](#)

## Outbreaks of a Rare Botulism Strain Stymie Scientists

22 October – The New York Times reported there were two dozen sudden, random outbreaks of type E botulism this summer and fall on the shores of Lake Erie. Over the past four years dozens of similar outbreaks have occurred, all involving type E botulism, a rare strain of the potent nerve toxin. Experts say they still do not know what to make of the outbreaks. The botulism, which is killing fish and birds, is a rare type of the bacteria *Clostridium botulinum*. The prime suspects are: the round goby, a small bottom-feeding fish; hard-shelled zebra mussels; and quagga mussels. All three species hitchhiked to the Great Lakes from the Black and Caspian Seas in the ballast water of international freighters. Another contributor to the botulism outbreak may be warming temperatures in the relatively shallow lake, whose average depth is 60 feet. [View Original Article](#).

## Poor Face Multitude of Environmental Health Threats

17 October - Poor people in the United States have long been believed to suffer from more noise and air pollution, crowding and other unhealthy environmental factors than their wealthier counterparts. Now, study findings suggest that exposure to such environmental hazards and the associated health risks may be higher than previously thought. Dr. Gary W. Evans and Elyse Kantrowitz investigated environmental health risks and socioeconomic status in a review of more than 140 studies. Low-income individuals were more likely to be exposed to air pollution from smog and other sources, and this exposure was linked to asthma, emphysema and other respiratory problems. SOURCE: Annual Review of Public Health 2002;23:303-331. [View Article](#)

## Soy Milk Coming to School Lunches? Group Claims Offering Dairy Products Only is Discrimination

17 October – CNN reported a physicians' group has asked the Agriculture Department to allow schools to serve soy milk as part of the subsidized school lunch program, arguing that many minority students cannot digest dairy products. The Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, which promotes alternatives to animal use, claims that the school lunch program discriminates against minority students. The USDA does not reimburse school districts for soy milk unless students provide a doctor's note demonstrating a medical need. The federally assisted lunch program requires that cow's milk be offered. The physicians' group claims that

USDA's policy violates the National School Lunch Act, which requires the program to accommodate all children's dietary needs. [View Article](#)

## **USPACOM**

### **China: United States Helps Establish Emergency Medicine**

15 October – [AFMIC](#) reported that the United States is helping China train doctors in the field of emergency medicine. The in-depth report can be viewed at <https://mic.afmic.detrick.army.mil> under “What’s new.”

## **USSOUTHCOM**

Nothing Significant to Report

Please contact the below-listed POC for suggested improvements and/or comments regarding this report. This report is also available on the USACHPPM website at <http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/Hioupdate/>.

POC: Rachel Gross, PhD  
[Rachel.Gross@APG.amedd.army.mil](mailto:Rachel.Gross@APG.amedd.army.mil)  
Lorraine Bell, DrPH, MSN  
[Lorraine.Bell@APG.amedd.army.mil](mailto:Lorraine.Bell@APG.amedd.army.mil)

Approved:  
[Kevin Delaney](#)  
Chief, Health Information Operations  
(410) 436-5217 or DSN 584-5217

## ACRONYMS

AFMIC - Armed Forces Medical Intelligence Center  
BBC – British Broadcasting Company  
BMJ – British Medical Journal  
BSE – Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy  
CIDRAP – Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy  
CDC – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
CNN – Cable News Network  
EPA – Environmental Protection Agency  
FDA – Food and Drug Administration  
IRIN - Integrated Regional Information Networks, part of the [UN](#) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).  
MMWR – Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report  
MSNBC – Microsoft National Broadcasting Company  
NASA – National Aeronautic and Space Association  
NIH – National Institute of Health  
NIOSH- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health  
VOA-Voice of America  
WHO – World Health Organization