

USACHPPM
HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE

06 May 2004

The HIO Update provides information regarding global medical and veterinary issues of interest to the United States (US) Army. The update does not attempt to analyze the information regarding potential strategic or tactical impact to the US Army and as such, should not be regarded as a medical intelligence product. Medical intelligence products are available at <http://mic.afmic.detrick.army.mil/>. The information in the HIO Update should provide an increased awareness of current and emerging health-related issues.

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HOT TOPICS

Animal-to-human diseases increasing, experts warn

06 May - ABC News Online reported that international experts have warned that the emergence of new diseases that are passed from animals to humans, such as avian flu, is accelerating and scientists are ill equipped to counter the trend. Their conclusions came at the end of a three-day meeting of scientists dealing with animal and human health at the World Health Organization (WHO), which examined the diseases that can jump the species barrier, known as zoonoses. The scientists warned that there was a lack of cooperation between animal and human health sectors that hampered efforts to prevent new diseases in humans. They also urged governments to take action to strengthen basic surveillance, research and treatment facilities throughout the world. Human behavior was a key factor driving the emergence of the diseases, the scientists said in a statement which listed pet ownership, global air travel, "food preference" and poverty. They also highlighted environmental factors such as climate change and farming practices. European scientists told the meeting that they were expecting the West Nile virus, a mosquito-borne viral infection that can cause fatal inflammation of the brain, to emerge in Europe soon because of warmer weather patterns. Nipah virus, which induces flu-like symptoms that often lead to encephalitis and a coma, jumped the species barrier from fruit bats to pigs and then to humans. Twenty-five of 29 people thought to have contracted the illness have died of Nipah in an outbreak in Bangladesh this year, according to US health authorities. [View Article](#)

Computer Modeling Targets Epidemics, Bioterror

A new initiative harnesses our nation's computing skill to enhance our ability to respond to disease epidemics and bioterrorism. The initiative, called MIDAS, will develop powerful computer modeling techniques to analyze and respond to infectious disease outbreaks, whether they occur naturally, such as SARS, or are released intentionally in a bioterrorist attack. MIDAS (an acronym for Models of Infectious Disease Agent Study) is sponsored by the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS), a part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) that has a strong interest in bioinformatics and computational biology. NIGMS recently awarded the first four grants in this new initiative, totaling more than \$28 million over five years. NIGMS supports basic biomedical research that lays the foundation for advances in disease diagnosis, treatment and prevention. For NIGMS news releases, science education booklets and other materials, visit <http://www.nigms.nih.gov>. [View Article](#)

First Target for Childhood Malaria Vaccine

3 May – EurekAlert reported that the discovery of a malaria parasite protein that is associated with the severe childhood form of the disease could save the lives of many thousands of children in sub-Saharan Africa. The researchers suggest that this protein could form the basis of a new vaccine against severe malaria. The malaria-causing parasite *Plasmodium falciparum*, which is transmitted by mosquito bite, replicates in human red blood cells, which then burst causing life-threatening fever. Infected red blood cells display parasite proteins on their surface that help the parasite to survive in their human host and cause disease complications. People who have grown up in regions where malaria is endemic usually develop protective antibodies to these parasite proteins, and symptoms in adults are mild compared with the severe disease seen in young children with no previous exposure. Previous work has indicated that the parasites causing severe disease express a set of proteins that are distinct from those produced by parasites that infect adults. The authors developed a new method to compare for the first time the proteins that are expressed by two types of *P. falciparum* that cause severe childhood malaria and less severe adult infection, respectively. They identified one protein that is expressed on the surface of red blood cells during severe childhood malaria but not during adult infections. This protein causes infected red blood cells to stick inside blood vessels, preventing their removal in the spleen. The study also found that this protein, unlike similar malaria proteins studied, does not vary between malaria parasites from East and West Africa, making it an ideal candidate for a universal vaccine to boost immunity to severe malaria in young children. [View Source](#)

Ideal 'Cocktail' for AIDS

04 May – The New York Times reported a three-year study of [AIDS](#) drugs has identified what the research leaders believe is the ideal triple-therapy cocktail for new patients. The successful cocktail, known colloquially as "two nukes plus a non-nuke," is the same one that the World Health Organization has been recommending in poor countries since 2002. It is also the same combination that Indian suppliers of generic drugs have been putting in three-in-one pills since 2001. The study suggests that patients who have never been on AIDS drugs should be started on a combination of two nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors ("nukes") and a non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor ("non-nuke"). Currently, American and European doctors prescribe many different mixes of the 20 drugs approved for fighting AIDS infections, and shift the mixes as patients develop resistance or side effects. The study of 1,147 patients, published in the New England Journal of Medicine, looked for an ideal regimen for new patients that avoided protease inhibitors. Those drugs are effective and often prescribed by Western doctors, but they can damage the liver or shift body fat into unsightly humps. [View Article](#) (free registration required)

Immunosuppressant Delays AIDS Onset

05 May – Innovations Report reported a drug that suppresses the immune system delays the onset of [AIDS](#) in patients with HIV, according to a study published this week in BMC Medicine. Prednisolone, taken without any antiviral therapy, postponed the loss of T-cells that leads to AIDS in 50% of HIV sufferers by between 2 and 10 years.

Rejecting the commonly accepted view that the CD4+ T cells are killed solely by the HIV virus, Jean-Marie Andrieu and Wei Lu of Université René Descartes in Paris believe that the hyperactivity of the immune system is part of the problem. To test whether reducing the activity of the immune system can protect patients' CD4+ T-cell numbers and hence delay AIDS onset, the researchers initiated a trial where 44 patients with HIV were given the immunosuppressant drug, prednisolone. After two years of taking the drug, 50% of patients had CD4+ T-cell counts higher than they did at the start of the trial. This compares with 5% of patients that did not take prednisolone. [View Article](#)

New Breast Cancer Detection Method Promising

03 May - CNN and Reuters reported new tests that measure water, oxygen and other breast tissue properties could be more effective than mammograms in diagnosing [breast cancer](#), scientists said. Researchers at Dartmouth Medical School used several types of electromagnetic waves to gauge how normal breast tissue absorbed or scattered light. By first measuring healthy breasts, the new techniques can eventually help researchers better understand and detect changes that could signal cancer, said the study's lead author, Steven Poplack. The three types of energy waves tested included infrared light, microwaves and low-level electrical currents, according to the study published in the May issue of the journal Radiology. The new techniques measured normal tissue levels of oxygen and hemoglobin, which carries oxygen in the blood. Breast cancer tissue is "more active" Poplack said, and uses more oxygen and blood to survive. Scientists also measured cell membrane structure and the tissue's ability to conduct and store electrical charges. [View Article](#)

New Look at Diabetes

06 May – Pravda reported a basic assumption about the biology of [diabetes](#) - the involvement of the pancreas - is wrong and that one of the most active areas of diabetes research today could be misguided. Scientists have long believed that many of the body's vital organs are home to elusive populations of adult stem cells, flexible cells with the ability to rebuild that organ. In the case of diabetes, researchers have had been hoping to cure the debilitating disease by finding stem cells in the pancreas that could help the body regain its ability to create insulin. But now Harvard cell biologist Douglas Melton has discovered that the cells that make insulin - called beta cells - are rarely, if ever, produced by adult stem cells and that the pancreas may have no stem cells at all. Melton, a vocal proponent of research on embryonic stem cells, said the new experiments, done with mice, undermine previous results that had seemed to show the existence of "adult pancreatic stem cells." The new study, Melton said, "provides no evidence whatsoever for the existence of an adult pancreatic stem cell." [View Article](#)

World Faces a 'Devastating' Diabetes Epidemic-WHO

05 May – The World Health Organization reported that the world faces a devastating [diabetes](#) epidemic, with the annual death toll already exceeding the three million killed

by AIDS and set to rise. The WHO and the International Diabetes Foundation said the number of sufferers worldwide would more than double from 171 million at present to 366 million by 2030. Although often thought a rich country risk, it is in poorer countries that diabetes is growing fastest. In India, for example, the number would leap from 32 million to 80 million. Furthermore, while in rich states diabetes affects mainly older people, in poorer countries incidence is surging among those still economically active, the two organizations said. Some 3.2 million people died in 2000, the latest year for which figures were available, of ailments brought on by diabetes such as cardiovascular disease and kidney failure. This compares with three million deaths from AIDS. There is some evidence ethnicity plays a role, with Asians and Africans seemingly more prone to the illness, which can also cause blindness and poor circulation leading in some cases to amputation of limbs. Most sufferers have type 2 diabetes, which some 58 percent of the time is triggered by being overweight, combined with a lack of exercise. [View Press Release](#) [More information on Diabetes](#)

Push for Anti-Nerve Agent Drug

02 May - BBC News reported molecules that destroy deadly nerve agents could provide the basis of a new type of civilian drug to protect people against a terrorist attack. The US Army is testing the enzymes - called paraoxonases - to see if they could be used to protect troops from exposure during battle. But Israeli researchers working in the field say any new drug could also have a role in the civil defense setting. The paraoxonases might also have applications as sprays to decontaminate areas and groups of people exposed to nerve agents. Paraoxonases are a particularly attractive choice as the basis for developing pre-treatment drugs, or prophylactics, because they completely break down organophosphorus nerve agents like sarin, the agent used in the Tokyo underground attack in March 1995. The new technology is likely to take some years to develop and test. [View Article](#)

Report: Women's Status in Central Europe and Africa

05 May - The status of women is improving in the former communist countries of central Europe, while women continue to suffer high levels of mortality in childbirth and low levels of education and contraceptive use in Africa, an advocacy group reported. Save the Children issued its annual "State of the World's Mothers" report this week that also showed the status of women in Chile, Costa Rica and Cuba approaching some measurements of industrialized countries. In the ranking of 119 nations, women fare best in prosperous northern European countries such as Sweden, Denmark and Finland that decades ago established welfare systems providing health and retiree benefits for the young and the old. Sweden ranked No. 1 in the list and Niger was at the bottom, at No. 119. The United States ranked No. 10. Indicators of women's health status include the lifetime risk of infant mortality in childbirth, the percent of women using contraception, the percent of births attended by a midwife or skilled health professional and percent of pregnant women with anemia. [View Report](#)

Testosterone Gel Shows Long-Term Benefits

05 May – Health Day News reported men suffering from low testosterone levels can receive safe and effective treatment by using a testosterone gel. Doctors found long-term, continuous use of AndroGel testosterone gel caused rapid and sustained improvements in sexual function and mood among men with hypogonadism, or low testosterone. The study found decreases in fat mass and increases in lean body mass following use of the gel. Gradual and progressive increases in bone mineral density in the spine and hip also occurred. The gel was applied through a patch. The doctors followed 163 hypogonadal men as they received continuous treatment for up to 42 months. [View Article](#)

No Impact of Malarone(TM) On Performance and Alertness Tasks

6 May – EurekAlert reported that results from a new study suggest that Malarone™ (atovaquone and proguanil hydrochloride) would not be expected to affect the ability of pilots and cabin crew to perform their duties while on an aircraft. The risk of developing clinical malaria for aircrew flying to endemic regions is estimated at 0.5 per 1000 persons per overnight stay. Considerable periods of incapacity and fatal cases in aircrew have been reported. The study is the first to assess side effects of an antimalarial drug in a hypobaric chamber at aircraft cabin pressure, and the results showed that clinically effective levels of Malarone™ were well tolerated and had no significant effect on vigilance, alertness, processing complex information, sleepiness and duration or quality of sleep for the volunteers. [View Article](#)

Vitamins 'Increase Cholesterol'

04 May – BBC News reported that although it has been thought that vitamins could protect the heart, New York University researchers found vitamins including E, C and beta carotene stop the liver breaking down an early form of bad cholesterol. The researchers say their findings mean they cannot recommend that people use the vitamins. Most research tends to suggest that supplementation with antioxidant vitamins, although not beneficial, does not lead to undue harm. The vitamins are antioxidants, thought to be beneficial because they attack free radicals, produced when the body fights infection, which inflict damage on the body's tissues. However, these studies found that antioxidants actually hampered the body's fight against damaging cholesterol. Normally, liver cells break down a key protein in harmful lipoproteins such as VLDL (very low density lipoprotein) which means they cannot be converted into a form of LDL that can enter the bloodstream. However, in laboratory tests, the New York researchers found vitamin E, C and beta carotene prevented this process from taking place in liver cells. Further tests in mice and rat livers showed vitamin E prevented this "breakdown" process taking place, meaning the liver destroyed fewer lipoproteins. [View Article](#)

Focus on Epidemiology

Responding to Detection of Aerosolized *Bacillus anthracis*

30 April – MMWR reported that autonomous detection systems (ADSs) are under development to detect agents of biologic and chemical terror in the environment. These systems will eventually be able to detect biologic and chemical hazards reliably and provide approximate real-time alerts that an agent is present. One type of ADS that tests specifically for *Bacillus anthracis* is being deployed in hundreds of postal distribution centers across the United States. Identification of aerosolized *B. anthracis* spores in an air sample can facilitate prompt on-site decontamination of workers and subsequent administration of post-exposure prophylaxis to prevent inhalational anthrax. Every employer who deploys an ADS should develop detailed plans for responding to a positive signal. Responding to ADS detection of *B. anthracis* involves coordinating responses with community partners and should include drills and exercises with these partners. This report provides guidelines in the following six areas: 1) response and consequence management planning, including the minimum components of a facility response plan; 2) immediate response and evacuation; 3) decontamination of potentially exposed workers to remove spores from clothing and skin and prevent introduction of *B. anthracis* into the worker's home and conveyances; 4) laboratory confirmation of an ADS signal; 5) steps for evaluating potentially contaminated environments; and 6) post-exposure prophylaxis and follow-up. [View Article](#)

DoD-GEIS: Influenza

05 May – The CDC has published 2004 recommendations for prevention & control of influenza from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). Annually and in advance of the influenza season, this report updates the previous year's recommendations on the use of influenza vaccine and antiviral agents ([Report](#)). Key changes in 2004 recommendations include 1) vaccine recommended for children aged 6-23 months and close contacts of children aged 0-23 months; 2) guidelines for vaccination of health-care workers with live, attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV); 3) personnel who may administer LAIV; 4) vaccine composition (the 2004-5 trivalent inactivated vaccine virus strains are: A/Fujian/411/2002 (H3N2)-like, A/New Caledonia/20/99 (H1N1)-like, and B/Shanghai/361/2002-like antigens); and 5) the assessment of vaccine supply and timing of vaccination. Vaccination is the primary method for preventing influenza and complications. The primary target groups for annual vaccination are, according to CDC, persons 1) at increased risk for influenza-related complications (e.g., those aged >65 years, children aged 6-23 months, pregnant women, and persons of any age with certain chronic medical conditions); 2) aged 50-64 years because this group has an elevated prevalence of certain chronic medical conditions; and 3) who live with or care for persons at high risk (e.g., health-care workers and household contacts who have frequent contact with persons at high risk and who can transmit influenza to those persons at high risk). Vaccination is associated with reductions in influenza-related respiratory illness and physician visits among all age groups, hospitalization and death among persons at high risk, otitis media among children, and work absenteeism among adults. Strategies to improve vaccination levels are included in the report (e.g., reminder/recall systems, standing orders programs).

Antiviral drugs for influenza chemoprophylaxis or treatment are a key adjunct, not a substitute, for vaccination. Key links and information regarding DOD's Global Influenza Program and information on hot topics such Influenza (avian and human), Leishmaniasis, West Nile Virus, and severe respiratory syndromes, including SARS, is available on the [DoD-GEIS website](#)

USCENTCOM

Gerbil Population Boom Predicts Plague

30 April – New Scientist reported [plague](#) outbreaks can be predicted by the rise and fall of the wild gerbil population in Kazakhstan, researchers have discovered. Their plague predicting model might also be applicable to other parts of the world where outbreaks are irregular. In Kazakhstan, wild great gerbil colonies are the natural reservoir for the deadly disease, which is caused by the bacterium *Yersinia pestis*. The gerbil population swings markedly from year to year, but Herwig Leirs, at the University of Antwerp, Belgium, says: "We found a fairly simple pattern - if the population of gerbils increases in density, when they reach a certain level, two years after that plague appears." He says his team's model cannot predict with certainty when an outbreak will occur, but it can predict the years when there is no chance of an outbreak. This could help public health teams to target their efforts to prevent plague on risky years only. [View Article](#)

Iraq: New Arrivals from Fallujah at Baghdad Camp

03 May – IRIN News reported an estimated 100 families or some 1,000 people are now in an Iraqi Red Crescent camp in the western al-Haddrah district of the capital, Baghdad, set up for those who fled the fighting in Fallujah. A rudimentary washroom has been built from concrete blocks and a storehouse tent of food is watched over by three aid workers. Two more "camps" have also been set up in Baghdad for families with nowhere to stay - one in a former building for refugees in al-Ameriyah, another nearby. An estimated 10,000 people may be in the three camps, according to Islamic Relief, a British NGO. People in the camps believe that up to 100,000 of their neighbors have fled the fighting, some staying with relatives in nearby villages, others with families in Baghdad. [View Article](#)

USEUCOM

Zimbabwe's Lack of Cattle Vaccines Alarms Neighbors

04 May – IRIN News reported the lack of foreign currency to buy [animal](#) vaccines has led to the outbreak of a variety of highly contagious cattle diseases in Zimbabwe that are threatening to spread throughout Southern Africa. Controllable livestock diseases like blackwater fever, heartwater and tick-borne diseases have drastically reduced Zimbabwe's national herd from around six million in 2001 to less than 250,000 today. Despite laws requiring the acquisition of veterinary service permits for people wishing to

move livestock from one place to another, the lack of effective monitoring and alleged bribe-taking by officials has led to the unchecked movement of stock, resulting in the failure of the control program, observers said. The government is remaining tight-lipped about an outbreak of contagious bovine pleuro-pneumonia (CBPP), or cattle lung disease, which was reportedly detected in the northwestern district of Tsholotsho in Matabeleland North province two weeks ago. Joseph Made, Minister of Lands, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement, said he had not received any conclusive information. The reported outbreak has caused alarm across Southern Africa. [View Article](#)

USNORTHCOM

9/11 Attacks Declared NYC's Worst Environmental Disaster

04 May - Health Day reported that rescue workers who toiled at Ground Zero in the days following the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center are likely to face long-term health problems from what a new federal report calls "the largest acute environmental disease that has ever befallen New York City." Cases of [asthma](#) and severe cough continue to plague firefighters, other rescue workers and nearby residents, according to the report compiled from six research centers, cited by the Associated Press. The findings appear in the May edition of Environmental Health Perspectives, published by a branch of the U.S. National Institutes of Health. One study of 183 rescue workers found that 33 percent had acquired a severe cough, 18 percent were wheezing, and 24 percent reported increased phlegm production. Asbestos particles detected in the dust from Ground Zero are likely to increase workers' risk of a rare but deadly form of cancer called [mesothelioma](#), the report said. [View Article](#)

Enbrel Approved to Treat Psoriasis

04 May – Health Day reported that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved the Amgen drug Enbrel (etanercept) to treat chronic, moderate-to-severe [psoriasis](#) in adults. The drug is already approved for four other conditions, among them the rheumatoid and psoriatic forms of arthritis. Enbrel is a genetically engineered protein that binds to and prevents the harmful effects of another protein, TNF, which promotes inflammation in the body. In the case of plaque psoriasis, the drug is designed to tame the inflamed, painful skin lesions caused by faulty immune system signals that cause skin cells to regenerate too quickly. In clinical trials involving more than 1,200 people over age 18, the drug "demonstrated rapid and significant clearing in many patients," Amgen said in a prepared statement. The National Psoriasis Foundation applauded the drug's approval for this purpose, noting that about 5 million Americans have the degenerative disease, for which there is no known cure. [View Article](#)

FDA Traces Feed Made From Untested Downer Cow

05 May - CIDRAP News reported that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said yesterday that it had traced the rendered remains of a Texas cow that should have been tested last week for [bovine spongiform encephalopathy](#) (BSE) and would make sure they are not fed to cattle. The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) disclosed that a cow at a slaughterhouse in San Angelo, Tex., last week showed possible signs of brain disease but, contrary to standard procedures, was not tested for BSE. An inspector who saw the cow stagger and fall condemned it as unfit for human consumption, and its carcass was sent to a rendering plant, the USDA said. The FDA said in a news release that the cow had been rendered into meat and bone meal for animal feed. The agency said it would tell the rendering firm that the meal could either be used for swine feed or destroyed. FDA regulations bar the use of protein from ruminant animals (such as cattle, sheep, goats, and bison) as feed for ruminants, because the practice can spread BSE among cattle. [View News Release](#) [View Article](#)

Lou Gehrig's Disease Hits Vets

29 April – CBS News reported [Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis](#) (ALS), which attacks nerves that control muscles, affects an estimated 30,000 people in the United States, and about 5,000 new cases are diagnosed annually. Men who served in the U.S. military during the last century appear to have an unusually high risk of dying from Lou Gehrig's disease, but experts are puzzled over why, and are uncertain whether the apparent hazard is real. The surprising finding comes from a study of veterans from World War I through Vietnam. It concludes they are about 60 percent more likely than non-veterans to get the often fatal illness, known formally as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS. Even with the increased risk, however, the disease is still rare for veterans and non-veterans alike. Dr. Susan Mather, environmental hazards chief at the Department of Veterans Affairs, called the discovery intriguing but added, "This study to me only raises more questions than it answers." Mather said the department will sponsor more studies. New research will try to confirm whether veterans truly are more likely to get ALS and if so, why. [View Article](#)

Mutation of HPAI H7N3 Virus Identified

05 May – ProMED reported that scientists have discovered that a slight genetic variation caused a strain of [avian influenza](#) A virus to be devastating to Fraser Valley poultry. The virus remained benign to humans. Investigators realized that it was a rare, and highly virulent, strain of avian influenza A (H7N3) virus soon after the virus began killing chickens on farms just north of the border town of Sumas, WA. They have concluded that the Fraser valley strain of avian influenza virus has never interacted with genetic material of human influenza A virus, easing a long-standing fear that avian and human influenza viruses could produce a virus that could spread rapidly through the human

population. The H7N3 virus is different from the H5 strain that has killed several people in Asia as well as hundreds of thousands of chickens. [View Article](#)

U.S. Braces for Another Summer of West Nile Virus

03 May – Health Day reported that with the arrival of warm weather throughout the United States, health officials are taking steps to limit threats posed by [West Nile virus](#), the potentially fatal mosquito-borne disease. In Arizona, for instance, Gov. Janet Napolitano has signed an order authorizing the Department of Health Services to spend \$100,000 on prevention measures, primarily offering counties money for additional mosquito abatement efforts, the Associated Press reported. West Nile is transmitted to humans through bites by mosquitoes, which become infected when they feed on infected birds. People over the age of 50 are more likely to develop serious symptoms and should take special care to avoid mosquito bites. West Nile first appeared in the United States in New York in 1999 and has been spreading westward ever since. Colorado was particularly hard hit last year, reporting nearly 3,000 cases and 61 deaths. That compared to just 14 cases in 2002, the AP said. [View Article](#)

USDA Allots \$19 Million for Animal ID System

03 May – CIDRAP News reported the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) last week announced it would spend \$18.8 million to begin a three-stage process for setting up a national animal identification system to help contain animal disease outbreaks. Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman said the goal of the effort is a system to identify farms and other sites exposed to foreign animal diseases. Shortly after a case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) was discovered in Washington state last December, Veneman promised her department would speed the development of an identification system for all species of food animals. In investigating the BSE case, officials traced the infected cow to its birth herd in Canada and subsequently found 28 of 81 cows from that herd, but they never found the rest. The first step in setting up the national system will be an evaluation of the pilot projects to determine which should be used in a national system, officials said. Also in the first stage, the USDA will talk with stakeholders about how to operate a system and will develop any regulations and legislation needed to support the system. The second stage will involve implementing the selected identification system at a regional level for one or more species, along with continued work on communication, regulations, and legislation, the USDA said. In the third stage, the system will be scaled up to the national level. [View Article](#)

USPACOM

Beijing Hospitals Release 159 from SARS Quarantine

06 May - Reuters reported that at least 159 people kept in isolation at two Beijing hospitals after coming in contact with a [Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome](#) (SARS) patient were released. Hundreds of others remain in quarantine. The SARS patient, a 20-year-old nurse identified only as Li, was released 4 May after spending nearly a month in hospital. The groups, placed under observation at Jianguo Hospital and People's Hospital in the capital, had been in isolation for about two weeks, the official Xinhua news agency reported. Li fell ill on 5 April showing symptoms of SARS such as fever and a cough. The Health Ministry has confirmed three more suspected cases of SARS in Beijing, taking the total number of victims in the latest outbreak to nine. One of the nine has died. Health officials have said hundreds of people have been placed in quarantine in the past few weeks. Nearly 800 people died of the potentially fatal illness worldwide after SARS emerged in southern China in late 2002. [View Source](#)

China Confirms Three More SARS Cases

04 May — ABC News reported China confirmed three more [SARS](#) cases, raising the number of people known to be infected in the country's latest outbreak to nine. All are linked to a Beijing research lab where investigators suspect workers caught and spread severe acute respiratory syndrome. The father of a nurse who treated an infected lab worker, the nurse's hospital roommate and a person who helped take care of the roommate are the latest confirmed cases, the Ministry of Health said. They previously were listed as suspected cases. No other people in China are suspected of SARS. The World Health Organization has said the outbreak is not a public health threat but it wants to find out what went wrong with lab safety at Beijing's Institute of Virology, which keeps SARS samples. A WHO team in Beijing has interviewed people at the SARS lab and the hospital where the patients were treated. [View Article](#)

Diarrhea Cases on the Rise in Bangladesh

30 April – ProMED reported the diarrhea situation in Dhaka is taking an alarming turn, with hospitals and clinics struggling to cope with the increasing number of patients. Around 400 patients a day were admitted in the last two weeks to the International Center for Diarrhea Disease Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B), the sole hospital for treatment of waterborne diseases at Mohakhali. About 70 to 80 percent of the patients coming from different areas of the city were children. ICDDR,B treated around 8000 diarrhea patients in March 2004. In February 2004, the number was 4881 and in January 2004 it was 5857. Outbreaks of diarrhea are common this time of year and the situation worsens in May and June. Besides the hot spell, doctors attribute the severity to the scarcity of safe drinking water and intake of stale or rotten food. [View Article](#)

India: Outbreak of Undiagnosed Jaundice in Ahmedabad

04 May – ProMED reported that jaundice has claimed three lives in the city, and more than 120 cases have been registered in the eastern suburbs, where this water-borne disease has assumed near-epidemic proportions. Sources in the Health Department of the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) have confirmed the death of a resident of Gayatrinagar, who was admitted to the hospital last week. Two deaths had already been reported from New Bhavaninagar and Gayatrinagar of the Amraiwadi area here. The majority of the jaundice cases were registered from these areas in the last few days. As many as 14 cases have been registered from the Nava Vadaj area of the city. The contamination of drinking water supplied to Amraiwadi and other eastern suburbs is the main cause of the disease. Officials of the AMC's Health and Engineering departments have been asked to get to the source of contamination. [View Article](#)

USSOUTHCOM

Outbreak of Acute Diarrhea in Rojas, Argentina

29 April – PAHO reported they received a report of an outbreak of acute diarrhea in the town of Rojas, Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina. This discovery spurred intensive surveillance activity for waterborne diseases, which include acute diarrheas, viral hepatitis, and hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS). By 6 April, 3165 cases of diarrhea had been reported, with a cumulative incidence of 1385 for every 10,000 inhabitants, with 102 cases requiring hospitalization. The highest incidence rates occurred between 29 March and 1 April; with the trend diminishing from that time to the date of the report. The population most affected has been children between the ages of 1 and 4. According to the laboratory results available to date, *Shigella* has been isolated in 24 of the 159 feces cultures carried out (15 with *Shigella flexneri* and 8 with *Shigella sonnei*), and *Escherichia coli* in 12 (with one isolated case of enterotoxigenic *Escherichia coli*). Three suspected cases of Hepatitis A were detected, two of which were ruled out and one confirmed. [View Article](#)

Venezuela: 2nd Rabies Death in Zulia State This Year

01 May – ProMED reported on Sun 25 April, the Head of the Epidemiology Department of the Venezuelan Ministry for Health and Social Development reported the death of a boy from Maracaibo from rabies. In a 13-year period, there have been 21 rabies deaths in the state of Zulia, 2 of which occurred this year [2004]. The Head of Epidemiology commented that this situation indicates deficiencies in the regional health system. He also placed special emphasis on the need for immediate vaccination of people who have been bitten by dogs or cats. [View Source](#)

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POC: Lorraine Bell, DrPH, MSN
Lorraine.Bell@APG.amedd.army.mil

Eileen Resta
eileen.resta@amedd.army.mil

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