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HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE

16 May 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

Cumulative Number of Reported Probable Cases of SARS From: 1 Nov 2002¹ To: 14 May 2003

Country	Cumulative # of case(s) ²	# of deaths	# recovered ³	Date last probable case reported
Australia	6	0	6	12/May/2003
Brazil	2	0	2	10/Apr/2003
Bulgaria	1	0	0	24/Apr/2003
Canada	143	23	104	04/May/2003
China	5124	267	1811	14/May/2003
China, Hong Kong ⁴	1698	227	1128	14/May/2003
China, Macao	1	0	0	09/May/2003
China, Taiwan	238	30	38	14/May/2003
Colombia	1	0	1	05/May/2003
Finland	1	0	0	07/May/2003
France	7	0	4	09/May/2003
Germany	9	0	9	09/May/2003
India	3	0	0	13/May/2003
Indonesia	2	0	2	23/Apr/2003
Italy	9	0	9	29/Apr/2003
Kuwait	1	0	1	09/Apr/2003
Malaysia	7	2	5	09/May/2003
Mongolia	9	0	6	06/May/2003
New Zealand	1	0	1	30/Apr/2003
Philippines	10	2	3	07/May/2003
Rep. of Ireland	1	0	1	21/Mar/2003
Rep. of Korea	3	0	1	14/May/2003
Romania	1	0	1	27/Mar/2003
Singapore	205	28	157	09/May/2003
South Africa	1	1	0	09/Apr/2003
Spain	1	0	1	02/Apr/2003
Sweden	3	0	3	18/Apr/2003
Switzerland	1	0	1	17/Mar/2003
Thailand	8	2	5	13/May/2003
United Kingdom	4	0	4	29/Apr/2003
United States	64	0	35	10/May/2003
Viet Nam	63	5	58	14/Apr/2003
Total	7628	587	3397	

Notes:

Cumulative number of cases includes number of deaths.

As SARS is a diagnosis of exclusion, the status of a reported case may change over time. This means that previously reported cases may be discarded after further investigation and follow-up.

1. The start of the period of surveillance has been changed to 1 November 2002 to capture cases of atypical pneumonia in China that are now recognized as being cases of SARS.
2. A decrease in the number of cumulative cases and discrepancies in the difference between cumulative number of cases of the last and the current WHO update are attributed to the discarding of cases.
3. Includes cases who are "discharged" or "recovered" as reported by the national public health authorities.
4. One death attributed to Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China occurred in a case medically transferred from Viet Nam. [View Source](#)

Cutting Down on Medication Mistakes

12 May – Health Scout News reported a new brochure meant to reduce prescription medication errors is being offered by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) and the National Council on Patient Information and Education. Your Medicine: Play It Safe is a 12-page brochure, available in English and Spanish that includes a detachable, pocket-sized medicine record that can be personalized. Medication errors can occur when a person receives the wrong medicine, takes an incorrect dose, takes their medicine at the wrong time or inappropriately combines prescription, non-prescription, and/or other medicines, food or beverages. The new brochure outlines 4 steps that help patients to safely use prescription medicines. An AHRQ-supported study released in March found that more than 1.9 million medication errors occurred among Medicare patients from 1999-2000. More than a quarter of those errors were preventable. [View Brochure](#)

Gene Test for Breast Cancer Spread

08 May – BBC News reported a genetic test could help predict the spread of [breast cancer](#) - and a woman's chances of surviving the disease. The test, developed by scientists at Duke University Medical Center in North Carolina, should help doctors to tailor treatments more effectively to individual patients. The new technique works by analyzing the activity of large clusters of 50-100 genes that have similar characteristics. The researchers identified several clusters - known as metagenes - which appears to control how a tumor will behave, and whether it will respond to treatment. It proved to be 90% accurate in predicting which women, who showed no or little sign that their tumors had spread to the lymph nodes, would have a recurrence of the cancer within three years. [View Article](#)

Genetic Attack Slows Hepatitis

12 May – BBC News reported scientists may have found a new way to treat the virus that causes [hepatitis B](#) - launching a strike on the genetic material it needs to spread. The study, on mice, is further evidence of the promise of the technique, called "RNA interference". Hepatitis B is the most common serious liver infection in the world, causing up to a million deaths worldwide a year. Although a vaccine is available against hepatitis B, once infected, the range of treatments available is limited. A team of researchers from California injected a biochemical called RNA into mice infected with hepatitis B. This binds with RNA, which is part of the virus, effectively "silencing" a key part of the virus' genetic machinery. This hampers the virus' efforts to replicate itself, and spread to infect other cells. While the RNA treatment managed this in mice, there is no certainty that the effects would be the same in humans. [View Article](#)

Health Illiteracy Adds Billions to Health Care Costs

12 May – Health Behavior News Service reported the cost of health care for some of the more health illiterate patients in the United States is almost 50 percent higher than necessary, according to research reported Wednesday. Unnecessary hospitalizations, delays in treatment and problems with prescriptions are among the costly problems that crop up when people do not understand their care and doctors fail to reach out to their patients, the research showed. The numbers add between 3 percent and 5 percent of personal health care costs nationwide, said Robert B. Friedland, Ph.D., of Georgetown University, who estimated that \$50 billion to \$73 billion could be saved each year by improving health literacy. [View Article](#)

Lack of Funds Threatens Bid to Wipe Out Polio

13 May – Alert Net reported a lack of funds threatens a global campaign to eradicate [polio](#), a crippling disease now found in only seven countries, by the target date of 2005, officials said. Some \$275 million is needed, including \$33 million by September, to complete the largest worldwide health campaign ever undertaken, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative said. Immunization programs are being scaled back and will focus on the seven endemic countries (Afghanistan, Egypt, India, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan and Somalia) and six countries at high risk of reinfection (Angola, Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Nepal and Sudan), a statement said. The initiative, begun in 1988, is a partnership among the U.N.'s World Health Organisation, U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF), Rotary International and U.S.-based Centers for Disease Control. [View Article](#)

More Antidepressant Use, Fewer Suicides

09 May – Reuters reported Australian researchers say comparing age groups, those who receive more prescriptions for antidepressants also have a lower rate of suicide. While antidepressants themselves may help people overcome suicidal thoughts and feelings, increases in the use of the medications may also reflect improvements in how [depression](#) -- a risk factor for suicide -- is treated. It is not necessarily the antidepressants that prevent suicide, but increased use of antidepressants is a proxy for improved overall management of depression. [View Article](#)

Muscles to Blame for Women's Knee Injuries: Study

09 May – Reuters reported women who participate in jumping and pivoting sports, such as basketball, volleyball and soccer are eight times more likely to rupture a knee-stabilizing ligament than are men. The reason women are more likely to injure the [anterior cruciate ligament](#) (ACL) may be weakness in the muscles surrounding the knee, according to a new study. Women who participated in jumping and pivoting sports had knee muscles that were weaker not only than those of men who played the same sports but also than knee muscles of women who participated in other sports, such as bicycling, crew and running, according to a study published in the Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery. The results show that training for women who participate in sports that carry a higher risk of this type of knee injury may not be adequate, study co-author Dr. Edward M. Wojtyls, said in an interview with Reuters. [View Article](#)

New Malaria Drug Combo Said to be Promising

13 May – Reuters reported Vietnamese researchers reported that a new drug combination for [malaria](#), costing about one euro per treatment, is fast acting, highly effective and well tolerated.

At the European Congress of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases, the Vietnamese researchers reported on a trial comparing the new CV8 combination -- containing dihydroartemisinin, piperaquine, trimethoprim and primaquine -- against Malarone, a combination of atovaquone and proguanil currently used to fight malaria. In the study, a total of 161 patients with malaria (*Plasmodium falciparum*) received either four doses of CV8 or three doses of Malarone, over three days. Tolerance to both combinations was good, and all patients recovered rapidly, Dr. Phan Trong Giao from Cho Ray Hospital in Ho Chi Minh City told the meeting. The average parasite clearance time was about 35 hours for both combinations, and fevers cleared in about 24 hours with both treatments. "Our study demonstrates that CV8 and Malarone are equally effective, fast-acting and tolerable," Giao said, adding that they are promising for areas with multi-drug-resistant malaria, such as Vietnam. [View Article](#)

One in 10 Still Get Stroke Surgery Inappropriately

09 May – Reuters reported the number of people who inappropriately undergo a risky type of surgery to clear [blocked neck arteries](#) appears to have dropped dramatically since the 1980s, new study findings suggest. However, one in 10 people still has the procedure even though the risks outweigh the benefits. In the 1980s the procedure was considered controversial because tens of thousands of people underwent carotid endarterectomy, but no rigorous studies had been conducted to weigh the surgery's efficacy. Halm and colleagues looked at 2,124 patients who underwent the procedure between 1997 and 1999 at six New York hospitals. Overall, 85 percent of operations were clearly appropriate. But nearly 11 percent -- about 14,000 people a year -- were done inappropriately, they found. [View Article](#)

Pressure, Heat Help Reduce Prion Infectivity in Processed Meats

12 May – Science Blog reported the combination of high temperature and very high pressure in the preparation of processed meats such as hot dogs and salami may effectively reduce the presence of [infectious prions](#) while retaining the taste, texture, and look of these meats, according to a study in today's Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) Early Edition. To conduct the study, the scientists prepared a paste of scrapie prion-infected brain tissue mixed with hot dogs. They then exposed the paste to temperatures of 120-135 degrees Celsius (250-275 F) and short bursts of ultra high pressure, in excess of 100,000 lbs. per square inch. The scientists found that they were able to retain the basic texture and flavor of the processed meat while reducing the prions to non-infective levels. This may have application in improving the safety of meat products. [View Article](#) [View NIH Report](#)

Preventing Bowel Disease

12 May – Health 24 reported blocking the action of a nerve cell receptor that appears to trigger intestinal inflammation could lead to development of new treatments to prevent [inflammatory bowel disease](#). Duke University researchers say they have found a specific nerve cell receptor in rats that appears to initiate the inflammation that leads to colitis, a type of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). The receptor, called the vanilloid receptor type 1 (VR-1), is stimulated by acid, heat and the chemical capsaicin, which puts the "hot" in red-hot chili peppers. Thus, when you eat chili peppers the VR-1 receives and transmits the sensations of pain and heat. Shutting down the action of the VR-1 in the rats prevented colitis, and the same process could prevent IBD in humans, says the study, in the May issue of Gut. Lead researcher Dr Christopher Mantyh says chemicals produced when the immune system senses a threat to the body's well being cause the inflammation, a hallmark of colitis. [View Article](#)

SARS Update

09 May – UPI reported the Food and Drug Administration warned Web sites selling bogus treatments and products for severe acute respiratory syndrome to stop advertising them or face charges and possible fines. [View Article](#) 10 May – The Lancet published an article where a series of 31 patients with probable [SARS](#), diagnosed from WHO criteria, were treated according to a treatment protocol consisting of antibacterials and a combination of ribavirin and methylprednisolone. Through experience with the first 11 patients, standard dose regimens were finalized, including pulsed methylprednisolone. [View Article](#) 12 May – Reuters reported the SARS epidemic is showing no signs of fading in China, even though the number of cases is declining. [View Article](#) [SARS Travel Recommendations Summary Table](#) 15 May – Reuters reported China, haunted by the possibility of SARS rampaging through its vast countryside, has threatened to execute or jail for life anyone who intentionally spreads the killer virus. [View Article](#)

Searching for Meaningful Life May Boost Immune System

May – Health Behavior News Service reported pursuing goals related to living a meaningful life may boost the activity of certain cells in the immune system, according to a small study of women who lost a relative to breast cancer. Women who placed more importance on these goals at the beginning of the study had higher levels of activity among their “natural killer” immune cells. In addition, women who elevated the importance of these goals over a one-month period showed increases in natural killer cell activity, compared to women who said that the importance of these goals had decreased for them. [View Article](#)

Spirituality Protects Against End-Of-Life Despair

09 May – Reuters reported having a sense of spiritual well-being, or an understanding of the meaning and purpose of life, regardless of religion -- appears to help terminally ill people avoid spending their last months of life in despair, according to a recent report. Among people with fewer than three months to live, U.S. investigators found that those with a strong sense of spiritual well-being were less likely than others to feel hopeless, want to die or consider suicide. Patients who were depressed only tended to want to die if they also had a low sense of spiritual well-being. In contrast, those with a strong sense of spirituality did not wish for a hastened death, regardless of whether they were also depressed. The current findings suggest that providing patients with a strong sense of spiritual well-being may enable them to avoid spending their last days in despair, according to the authors. [View Article](#)

The Male Biological Clock

08 May – CBS News reported a lot of reports warn of the risk of conceiving a child as an older mother, but there is new evidence that a man's biological clock ticks just as loudly as a woman's. The study in the Journal of Urology suggests older fathers have similar risks as older mothers of producing children with greater chances of [birth defects](#), such as Down syndrome, and they also lose their ability to conceive. The report found men over 40 years of age were twice as likely to have a child with down syndrome than those less than 20 years old. Researchers in this study were able to look at a large number of births to older women in New York State over a 14-year period. They found a dramatic increase in the number of older parents in general, and saw the greatest increase in the number of Down syndrome cases where the father and mother were both over 40. [View Article](#)

WHO: Traffic Is Four Times as Lethal as War

14 May – Reuters reported traffic kills four times as many people as wars and far more people commit suicide than are murdered, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said. In two reports on injuries, both accidental and deliberate, the United Nations agency said they killed more than five million people in 2000, one tenth of the global death toll. Nearly 90 percent of injury-related deaths took place in poorer countries. Road deaths, totaling 1.26 million, claimed the highest number of victims, followed by suicide at 815,000 and interpersonal violence at 520,000. Wars and conflict ranked sixth -- between poisoning and falls -- with 310,000 deaths. WHO said age, sex, geographical region and income level all played a part in the distribution and incidence of fatal injuries. [View Article](#)

USEUCOM

Angola: Over 100 Cases of Sleeping Sickness Recorded in Negaje

12 May – AllAfrica.com reported over 100 cases of [sleeping sickness](#) were recorded during the first quarter of the year 2003, in Negaje district, in Angola's Northern Uije province, a health source announced. According to the source, 35 other cases were recorded in Ambaca district, in Kwanza Norte province. A campaign to detect people infected by the disease will take place in Negaje in the forthcoming five days. [View Article](#)

Cote D Ivoire: Struggle to Revive Health Services in Rebel-held North

08 May - IRIN News reported the bullets have stopped flying in most of the rebel-held areas of northern Cote d'Ivoire, but health services in the region have all but collapsed, according to relief agencies working hard to support over three million people in the region. Pierre Ryter, the head of the International Committee of the Red Cross in West Africa, told IRIN that only 25% of hospitals and health centers in the northern half of the country were working. All relief agencies working to improve the humanitarian situation in the rebel-held north after seven months of civil war have complained of a poor response by international donors to repeated appeals for money to get doctors and nurses there working again. [View Article](#)

Central African Republic: No Safe Drinking Water for Northern Population

08 May – IRIN News reported a UN humanitarian assessment mission to the northern province of Ouham, in the Central African Republic, found that water facilities had been seriously damaged during six-months of fighting, Diego Zorilla, who headed the 2-6 May mission, told IRIN. The mission, he said, found that just six of the 20 wells UNICEF had dug in Bossangoa, 305 km north of Bangui, the capital, were still in a good state. In addition, he said that equipment belonging to the state water utility, the Societe des Eaux de Centrafrique, had been looted, rendering the company unable to provide safe drinking water. [View Article](#)

Drug Resistant *E. coli* Common in Europe

12 May – Reuters reported more than one in four [E. coli](#) bacterial infections in Europe are caused by strains that are resistant to at least one antibiotic, according to the first results from a pan-European surveillance network. What's more, 7.5 percent of the bacteria isolated from patients are impervious to at least three classes of drugs and there is evidence the problem is increasing. Resistance to aminopenicillins was over 25 percent in all 24 countries that took part

in the study, with an average of 44 percent across the region, she said. There was also a hint that resistance rates were increasing. Looking at Europe country-by-country, there is a higher level of resistance in South and Eastern Europe. Prescribing practices in those regions might be responsible for these higher rates, suggested the session chairman, Dr. Ferenc Rozgonyi, from Budapest's Semmelweis University of Medicine. In the East and South of Europe, antibiotic policies tend to be more liberal, with the result that more of the drugs are used. [View Article](#)

Israel: A Woman Dead of Rabies in the Negev

11 May – ProMed reported a 60-year-old Bedouin woman died on Friday from [rabies](#). This is the first rabies case in the Negev in many years. Reportedly, the woman was bitten or scratched by a cat that entered her home, and she did not report the incident to health authorities. The woman was then hospitalized complaining of headaches and fever. Her situation deteriorated, she developed symptoms of encephalomyelitis followed by coma, and died. Laboratory tests for rabies were negative, a Health Ministry source said. After her death, samples of her brain tissue were tested again, and this time came out positive. The minister said a few animals with rabies have been found in the desert lately and warned Negev residents to avoid contact with stray animals. In addition, oral vaccination of wildlife has been started in the Negev. [View Report 1](#)
[View Report 2](#)

Malawi: Cholera Outbreak in Blantyre

14 May – AllAfrica.com reported Malawi's health authorities have stepped up efforts to contain a [cholera](#) outbreak within its commercial capital of Blantyre. The water borne disease surfaced three weeks ago and has infected eight people and killed one in the area that receives clean water from the state, namely the medium density area of Naperi, and the high density areas of Zingwangwa and Manase. Health officer for the Blantyre district, Elita Kamoto, blames the outbreak on the Blantyre Water Board, which cut the water supply to residents who hadn't paid bills. Affected residents have been forced to collect water from streams. Preventative health director in the health ministry, Habib Somanje, expressed concern at the fatality. He said one death in less than eight cholera cases was high. He said the fatality standard set by the World Health Organisation's (WHO) was only one death per 100 cases. [View Article](#)

Sleeping Sickness Epidemic Worries Ministry of Health

10 May – AllAfrica.com reported an official from the Ministry of Health has expressed fear over the increasing prevalence of [sleeping sickness](#) in the northern and southeastern Uganda. Officials said that 80 cases are reported in the north and 50 cases in the southeastern per month. They said the returning refugees from southern Sudan where there is an epidemic of the disease have caused the re-emergence of sleeping sickness in the north. The disease in the southeastern is moving northwards towards Lira following the current restocking of animals. If the two diseases merge the problem will get worse. [View Article](#)

South Africa: Cholera Kills Four in Mpumalanga

14 May – AllAfrica.com reported four people have died of [cholera](#) in Mpumalanga province since the disease broke out in the rural Nkomazi region about three weeks ago. Provincial health spokesman Dumisani Mlangeni said today that 180 suspected cholera cases had been reported so far and that 42 have been confirmed. Most of the Nkomazi communities do not have access to clean running water. Mlangeni said government provided water to the communities in tanks but some residents complained that the water was salty, and they therefore continue to use stream water. The health department has also supplied public health institutions in the

region with bleach to disinfect polluted water, while constant alerts are being broadcast on local radio. [View Report](#)

South Africa: Northern Cape Foils Spread of Anthrax

14 May – AllAfrica.com reported The Veterinary Services office of the Northern Cape government's agriculture, land reform, environment and conservation department has undertaken an all out effort to stop the possible spread of the [anthrax](#) outbreak. The department's reaction follows last week's outbreak of the disease at Kudumane in the North West province that shares a border with the Northern Cape settlement of Wrenchville near Kuruman. Department spokesperson Thabo Mothibi said over 106 sheep and goats, 67 cattle and six horses had been vaccinated at Wrenchville since the outbreak. Mr Mothibi said the vaccination would continue covering the 20km radius of the outbreak until Friday next week and would target over 44 communal and commercial farms. The Northern Cape government has warned people not to eat carcasses of animals suspected to have died of anthrax but should bury the carcasses at a depth of at least two meters below ground after which the soil must be treated with lime chloride. [View Article](#)

Uganda: Alert Over Ebola Outbreak in Neighboring Sudan

09 May – IRIN News reported the Ugandan government is urging against all non-essential travel across the country's northern border after a fresh outbreak of the deadly [Ebola virus](#) killed 45 people in southern Sudan. In particular, residents of Kitgum province – the region with the longest and most porous border with Sudan – have been warned that frequent trips between the two countries carry the risk of spreading the virus to Uganda. The deaths occurred in Ikoto, a small town about 45 km north of the Ugandan border with Sudan and 126 km from Gulu – northern Uganda's largest town and scene of the last recorded Ebola outbreak in the country, in which over 200 people died out of 487 infected. Kitgum district chief Nahaman Ojwee confirmed that the government has been alerted and is taking measures to prevent the virus spreading through the trade routes operating between Kitgum and the Sudanese region of the Emotong Mountains, whose ranges merge into Uganda's Agoro hills. [View Article](#)

USCENTCOM

Ethiopia: Warning of Disaster as 40 Die in Southern Floods

08 May – IRIN News reported the death toll in the severe floods that have hit southern Ethiopia has now topped 40 - including five children, officials told IRIN. More than 95,000 people have been forced to flee their homes after the Wabe Shebelle River burst its banks, flooding dozens of villages. Crocodiles also attacked and killed four people during the flooding, said Mines Minister Mohamoud Dirir Gheddi, who is also chairman of the ruling Somali People's Democratic Party in the region. He said the region desperately needs medical help to control [waterborne diseases](#). [View Article](#)

Iraq: Experts Fear a Cholera Epidemic in Basra

13 May – ProMed reported as sewage continues to spill into the streets of Basra, Iraq's second largest city, and the local population is increasingly relying on water from fetid canals, the World Health Organization warned that Basra was poised for an epidemic of [cholera](#). At least 55 suspected cases have been reported in Basra in recent days, and Dr. Denis Coulombier, an official of the health agency here, estimated that several hundred more cases had yet to be

diagnosed. There have been no deaths. Until an effective community water supply can be set up, health workers are trying to teach residents to chlorinate or boil their water. Doctors at hospitals here say they have supplies to deal with the current cholera outbreak but will not have the fluid and drugs needed to cope with a larger outbreak. [View Report](#)

Iraqis May Face Fallout from Nuclear Looting Soon

12 May - Reuters reported villagers who looted uranium-tainted barrels from a former Iraqi [nuclear](#) facility may face the fallout within months, when the effects of using them at home could show up in rising cancer cases, experts say. U.S. soldiers now guard the facility in Tuwaitha, about 25 km (16 miles) south of Baghdad that was bombed first by the Israelis in 1981 and then by a U.S.-led coalition in 1991. In the U.S.-led war that toppled Saddam Hussein on April 9, there were no functioning reactors to bomb. But throughout the various raids, the "yellow cake factory" -- named after the stores of uranium peroxide used as a raw material to make nuclear fuel -- was undamaged. Hisham Abdel-Malik, an Iraqi nuclear expert who has worked alongside the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) since 1988, said looting began as soon as officials fled the facility when the U.S. troops reached Baghdad [View Article](#)

Kuwait to Send Water Purification Plants to Iraq

11 May – The Associated Press reported Kuwait said it was sending eight water purification and desalination plants to Iraq to help prevent the spread of cholera. The statement from the Kuwaiti Cabinet's weekly meeting did not say when the plants would be sent or give other details. Two hospitals have reported 17 cases of [cholera](#) in Basra, Iraq's second largest city. The World Health Organization fears far more have gone unreported. Water facilities damaged during the U.S.-led war that toppled Saddam Hussein are still not working to full capacity, depriving most Iraqis of clean drinking water. [View Article](#)

UN Coordinates Iraq Relief Operations with European Union

09 May – Europa World reported the top United Nations humanitarian official in Iraq met this week with a senior representative of the European Union (EU). EU Commissioner for Development Poul Nielsen said he was looking to the UN to establish itself as the main humanitarian coordinating body. A team from the UN World Health Organization (WHO), which now has a permanent presence in Iraq's second city of Basra, visited the Al Tahrir Teaching Hospital, where doctors reported a significant increase in the number of cases of [diarrheal diseases](#), [gastroenteritis](#) and dehydration. WHO said the other overriding problem in Basra's local health sector was security. In addition to stolen equipment and hospital vehicles, female health workers particularly feared for their personal safety, it said. [View Article](#)

USNORTHCOM

Dogs Take Their Place in Arsenal Against Chemical Attack

12 May – The New York Times reported the federal government is enlisting an old, and very trusted, ally in the hunt for terrorists who might try to use unconventional weapons on American soil. The Department of Homeland Security says that in a research program kept quiet for months, it has determined, apparently for the first time, that ordinary dogs can be trained to sniff out trace amounts of the nonlethal components of chemical weapons, including sarin and cyanide. As a result, the department's Bureau of Customs and Border Protection has begun to train a corps of so-called chemical detector dogs and is planning to deploy them at airports,

seaports, government buildings and other potential terrorist targets, where they will work alongside the police dogs that have long been used to sniff out narcotics, explosives and human remains. [View Article](#)

Limits on Veterans' Covered Drugs Slashes Costs

09i May – Reuters reported the federal health system that serves America's veterans saved an estimated \$82.4 million on five classes of prescription drugs through mid-1999 after implementing a national "formulary" that limits coverage in those classes, a Harvard study finds. As Congress considers legislation to give the nation's seniors a prescription drug benefit, the Department of Veterans Affairs' approach could be a model for managing drug costs in the Medicare program, researchers report in the May/June issue of Health Affairs. While different in many ways from Medicare, the VA's health system covers a similar population of the elderly and disabled [View Article](#)

Nationwide Seat Belt Campaign Starting

13 May – KRON 4 reported state and federal authorities are reminding people to buckle up. Motorists who don't wear their seat belts will be the targets of police traffic stops and a national campaign aimed at increasing seat belt use. The semi-annual campaign is launched around every Memorial Day and Thanksgiving. It officially starts on May 19th -- but the ads start running today. Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta and Surgeon General Richard Carmona are kicking off the "Click It or Ticket" campaign in Washington. Starting May 19th, officers from 12-thousand law enforcement agencies in all 50 states and Puerto Rico will spend the next two weeks stepping up seat belt enforcement efforts. [View Article](#)

New Guidelines Lower Blood Pressure Levels

14 May – Reuters reported people who once thought their blood pressure was fine actually need to start exercising and eating better, according to new U.S. guidelines. While doctors do not usually worry about a patient's blood pressure until it reaches 140/90, the new guidelines say the risk of heart disease actually starts when a patient's blood pressure is at 115/75. The guidelines, issued by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute and endorsed by the American Heart Association, say patients need to start exercising and eating a healthier diet once blood pressure reaches 120/80. [View Article](#)

One in Four Americans Get No Exercise, Study Finds

14 May – Reuters reported a quarter of all Americans get virtually no exercise, raising their risk of heart disease, diabetes and cancer, a government report said on Wednesday. Only 19 percent get a "high" level of physical activity at work or in their free time, the survey by the National Center for Health Statistics found. The report, based on 32,000 interviews conducted in 2000, found blacks and Hispanics were less likely to exercise than whites, with just 15 percent reporting they get a high level of physical activity. [View Article](#)

SARS Report of Cases in the United States as of 12 May 2003

State	Total Cases	Suspect Cases	Probable Cases	State	Total Cases	Suspect Cases	Probable Cases
Alabama	1	1	0	Missouri	2	2	0
Arizona	1	1	0	Nevada	5	5	0
Arkansas	1	1	0	New Hampshire	1	1	0

California	68	44	24*	New Jersey	4	3	1*
Colorado	11	8	3	New Mexico	1	0	1*
Connecticut	8	6	2	New York	38	30	8
Florida	18	15	3	North Carolina	8	8	0
Georgia	7	6	1	Ohio	13	12	1
Hawaii	6	4	2	Oregon	1	1	0
Illinois	17	15	2	Pennsylvania	15	14	1*
Indiana	1	1	0	Rhode Island	2	2	0
Kansas	3	2	1	South Carolina	2	2	0
Kentucky	5	3	2	South Dakota	1	1	0
Maine	2	2	0	Texas	7	7	0
Maryland	5	5	0	Utah	7	6	1*
Massachusetts	20	18	2	Vermont	2	2	0
Michigan	4	4	0	Virginia	9	6	3*
Minnesota	11	9	2	Washington	26	24	2
Mississippi	2	1	1	Wisconsin	10	9	1
				Total	345	281	64

**Includes one case with laboratory evidence of SARS-associated coronavirus (SARS-CoV) infection. Refer to [case definition](#) for description of suspect and probable cases and laboratory criteria for SARS Co-V. [View Source](#)

Texas: Shigellosis Outbreak Spreading Across Lubbock County

09 May – ProMed reported a [shigellosis](#) outbreak is spreading like wildfire across Lubbock County. Local health officials have been on high alert since the beginning of the year. The number of cases has more than quadrupled over the past 4 months. In January 2003, Lubbock County had just 51 cases. But that number jumped dramatically beginning in March. Last month [April 2003], doctors treated 278 cases. Most of the victims are children. [View Report](#)

The Facts: West Nile

13 May – Canoe Health has created a website that answers questions about the [West Nile virus](#). It discusses risks and how to best protect against the virus, including what are the symptoms that suggest infection by West Nile virus, protection from the virus and how the West Nile virus spreads. [Link to West Nile website](#)

Vets Radiation Exposure Misjudged

08 May – CBS News reported veterans who took part in aboveground nuclear weapons tests a half-century ago were exposed to more [radiation](#) than government agencies believed, researchers said Thursday - but not in amounts that would qualify many more for compensation. Doses were often underestimated, many key assumptions and methods used were not appropriate and many calculations were illogical or not explained. Updating the estimates might make a difference in some cases. However, the committee does not believe it would significantly affect the number of awards made. Veterans with any of 21 types of [cancer](#) are already automatically granted compensation, and the dose estimates are used to determine payment for veterans with some other illnesses and types of cancer. [View Article](#)

US Drills for Terror Attacks

12 May – BBC News reported the United States is embarking on a five-day simulation of attacks on two major cities by a terrorist group using [radiological](#) and [biological](#) devices. The training exercise, which aims to prepare local, state and federal government agencies to deal with simultaneous terror attacks, is due to begin in Chicago and Seattle on 12 May. About 8,500

people will take part in the operation, which will begin with a simulation of a radiological weapon, a "dirty bomb", being set off in Seattle. At roughly the same time, there will be a simulated biological attack on Chicago, with thousands of patients showing symptoms of serious illnesses beginning to appear in the city's hospitals the next day. The mock attacks - which will also see the participation of the American Red Cross and the Canadian Government - will be coordinated by the new Department of Homeland Security in Washington DC. [View Article](#)

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Australia (North Queensland): 5 Suburbs of Cairns Added to Dengue List

12 May – ProMed reported health officials dealing with the [dengue](#) outbreak in far north Queensland have highlighted 5 new hot spots of infection. More than 365 people have been diagnosed with the potentially fatal, mosquito-borne disease since it was first detected in Cairns in February 2003. A Queensland Health spokeswoman says staff has now added the suburbs of Edge Hill, Whitfield, Smithfield, Edmonton, and Kewarra Beach to the list of affected areas. She says residents are reminded to avoid being bitten and to eradicate mosquito-breeding sites in and around homes and workplaces. [View Report](#)

Japan Bans Imports of Chinese Poultry Products

12 May – ProMed reported the Japanese government said on Monday it had temporarily banned imports of poultry products from China after its quarantine office detected the [bird flu virus](#) in imported Chinese duck products. The Agriculture Ministry said in a statement that the tests on duck products from China had discovered the H5N1 bird flu virus. [View Report](#)

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Costa Rica: Most Dengue Cases reported from Guanacaste & Alajuela Provinces

12 May – ProMed reported so far this year, there have been reports of 6 cases of [dengue hemorrhagic fever](#) [DHF]: 3 cases in Puntarenas, and the rest in Guanacaste. Only 2 cases had been reported by this date in 2002. Health Minister Maria del Rocio Saenz Madrigal once again urged the population to eliminate the mosquito breeding sites so that the disease may be combated. The cantons with the largest number of dengue fever patients are Santa Cruz and Carrillo [both in the province of Guanacaste] with 417 and 143 cases respectively, followed by Puntarenas and Orotina [both in the province of Alajuela]. The health authorities face 2 additional problems, the first of which is the increase in the rains expected this year that could facilitate the reproduction of the mosquito vector. The second problem is the indication that the mosquito has the propensity to reproduce in dirty, residual waters. [View Report](#)

Cuba: Transmissible Gastroenteritis

10 May – ProMed reported on 43 outbreak of [transmissible gastroenteritis](#) (TGE) in pigs, a disease never reported before in Cuba. The presence of gastrointestinal disorders, coinciding with fungal contamination of certain raw materials used in the production of feed, initially pointed to [mycotoxin](#) poisoning with [vomitoxin](#). The diagnostic work-up was therefore aimed at

confirming this hypothesis. Subsequently, the epidemiological pattern of the disease led to investigations being reoriented towards an infectious cause. All the necessary tests were carried out. Disease control measures are in effect. Once the disease becomes chronic in a large herd of pigs, it can cause considerable, persistent problems and sustained production losses. It is of interest to note that the TGE virus is a Coronavirus. [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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