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HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE

08 August 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

Artificially Evolved Protein Destroys Nerve Gas

31 July – The Nature journal reported chemists in the United States have modified a common bacterial enzyme so that it pulls apart a lethal nerve agent manufactured as a chemical weapon. Frank Raushel, of Texas A&M University in College Station, and colleagues tuned the enzyme phosphotriesterase to destroy the nerve gas [soman](#). A more efficient version could form part of a mask to protect against nerve agents, Raushel suggests. [View Article](#)

Breakthrough on Ebola Vaccine

06 August – BBC News reported scientists have developed a fast-acting [Ebola](#) vaccine that protects monkeys after a single shot. If the vaccine proves similarly effective in humans, it may one day allow scientists to contain Ebola outbreaks quickly. The research is the result of collaboration between teams of scientists at the Dale and Betty Bumpers Vaccine Research Center and the US Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases. [View Article](#)

Cheap Malaria Drug Approved

06 August – BBC News reported a cheap drug to combat [malaria](#) is to be launched by GlaxoSmithKline. The drug could help to save millions of lives each year in some of the world's poorest countries. According to GSK, a course of treatment with Lapdap will cost just 18 pence (29 US cents) for an adult and 9 pence for a child. This latest drug, which combines two existing anti-malaria compounds, has been developed by GSK in collaboration with WHO and scientists in the UK. Trials have shown that it is more effective than some existing treatments and can also help people who are resistant to some older drugs. [View Article](#)

Fewer Women to Need Annual Cervical Tests

01 August – Newsday reported an increasing number of women will no longer need annual testing for [cervical cancer](#), say guidelines issued 31 July. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists said: 1) A first Pap test should occur within three years after first sexual intercourse or by age 21, whichever comes first. Previously, women were supposed to be tested by age 18 or onset of sexual activity. 2) Women should undergo annual Pap tests up to age 30. 3) Those 30 and older have two options. They can start getting checked every two to three years after having three consecutive, normal Pap tests. Or they undergo a combination of a Pap exam and testing for the [human papillomavirus](#), or HPV, that causes most cervical cancer. Passing both those tests means they need rechecking no more than every three years. The advice largely mirrors earlier recommendations from the American Cancer Society and the government. [View Article](#) [View ACOG Report](#)

Go-ahead for Anti-AIDS Gel Trials

31 July – CNN reported an Australian company has won regulatory approval to begin human trials for an anti-[AIDS](#) gel which could dramatically reduce the spread of the virus in developing countries. Melbourne-based Starpharma announced Thursday that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has given clearance for phase one human trials of the trial gel. The drug has proven 100 percent effective in preventing HIV and other sexually-transmitted diseases in primate trials. The gel -- if human trials prove successful -- would be particularly targeted at women in poorer nations, giving them cheaper, easier personal control over HIV prevention. In animals trials using macaque monkeys, a single application of the VivaGel product proved 100 percent effective against the monkey version of HIV as well as animal versions of genital herpes and chlamydia. [View Article](#)

Green Tea's Cancer-fighting Allure Becomes More Potent

04 August – Eurekalert reported green tea's ability to fight cancer is even more potent and varied than scientists suspected, say researchers who have discovered that chemicals in green tea shut down one of the key molecules that tobacco relies upon to cause cancer. It's a find that could help explain why people who drink green tea are less likely to develop cancer. The finding by scientists at the University of Rochester's Environmental Health Science Center appears in the July 21 issue of Chemical Research in Toxicology, published by the American Chemical Society. [View Article](#)

Physical Activity May Slow Atherosclerosis

01 August – Reuters reported leisure time physical activity slows the build-up of plaque in the arteries ([atherosclerosis](#)), and the more vigorous the activity, the greater the benefit. Those findings, which are reported in the July issue of the American Journal of Medicine, are based on a study of 500 subjects who were followed for up to 3 years. The subjects underwent ultrasound testing to assess the progression of atherosclerosis in the carotid artery, a major artery in the neck. None of the subjects had a history of cardiovascular disease. Subjects who engaged in vigorous activity during leisure, defined as aerobic activity at least 3.5 times per week, showed the least amount of plaque thickening per year--only 5.5 microns. In contrast, the plaques of sedentary subjects thickened by 14.3 microns each year. [View Article](#)

Sexually Active Young Women Often Underestimate STD Risk

01 August – Eurekalert reported most sexually active single women believe they are at low risk for contracting [sexually transmitted diseases \(STDs\)](#), but a new study says their risk profiles are in fact similar to those women in higher risk populations. Researchers say their study highlights the need for health care clinicians to spend more time with young women identifying risk factors, explaining consequences of unprotected sex and promoting condom use. The study was published in the August 2003 issue of Preventive Medicine. The research was supported by a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health. [View Article](#)

Sixty Day Therapy May Not Prevent Anthrax

01 August – Reuters reported while 60 days of antibiotic therapy may have been enough to prevent infection in people exposed to [anthrax](#) during the 2001 U.S. outbreak, it may not be suitable for future outbreaks involving higher levels of exposure to the bacteria. Dr. Brookmeyer and colleagues from Johns Hopkins University used a statistical model to estimate the duration of antibiotic treatment needed to prevent inhalational anthrax for outbreaks involving different levels of exposure. The model assumed that the antibiotic given would be effective in eliminating anthrax spores. It was found that 60 days of antibiotics may not be enough to prevent disease in some outbreaks. In the event of a massive attack

with high-spore doses, a minimum of 4 months would be required. In outbreaks with very low doses, however, 60 days should be more than adequate. The researchers' findings are published in the July 28th early edition of the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. [View Article](#)

Study of Leishmania Parasite May Lead to Vaccine, New Treatments

01 August – Eurekalert reported research at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis has revealed several essential functions of the molecule covering the surface of the [Leishmania](#) parasite. The study found that parasites engineered to lack the molecule known as lipophosphoglycan (LPG) were ten times more vulnerable to attack by an immune defense known as complement, which is found in the bloodstream. And although parasites that lack LPG easily enter macrophages (immune cells that the parasite normally infects), they were quickly destroyed once inside the cells. The findings are published online and in the Aug. 5 issue of the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. [View Article](#)

Vitamin C May Protect Against Ulcer-causing Bacteria

04 August - Science Blog reported a study led by researchers at the San Francisco VA Medical Center (SFVAMC) has found that the lower the level of vitamin C in the blood the more likely a person will become infected by [Helicobacter pylori](#), the bacteria that can cause peptic ulcers and stomach cancer. [View Article](#)

Vitamin Cocktail Cuts Cancer Deaths

04 August – BBC News reported a dietary supplement of vitamins and minerals may help to slash the risk of cancer, research has found. The supplement contained the same levels of antioxidant nutrients found in a diet rich in fruit and vegetables. Scientists in France gave the supplement to thousands of men and women over a seven year period, and found cancer rates were cut by almost a third. Researchers say their work - SuViMax study - provides compelling evidence of the importance of a healthy diet. [View Article](#)

Volcanic Pool Enzyme Kills Prions

29 July – New Scientist reported a new disinfectant, based on enzymes collected from a volcanic pool, is showing promise in destroying the mutated prion proteins that cause [vCJD](#), the human form of [BSE](#). Standard decontamination procedures, such as detergents, UV inactivation and high-pressure boiling at 137 °C, have proven unsuccessful at destroying all the prions on contaminated equipment. But now researchers at the UK's Center for Applied Microbiology and Research (CAMR) in Porton Down and biotechnology company Genencor believe they have developed a prion eradication agent. "Essentially it's a protease enzyme, which is active at high alkalinity - pH 12 to 14 - and a temperature of between 60 and 80 °C," says CAMR's Phil Luton. "It requires an incubation period of less than one hour under the enzymes' optimal conditions to degrade the prions." [View Article](#)

USEUCOM

Britain: Asian Mosquito Poses Deadly Health Threat

06 August – ProMed reported a nationwide search has been ordered at ports and used-tire depots for an Asian mosquito that is posing a new health threat in Britain. The Asian tiger mosquito, *Aedes albopictus*, has been found as close as Normandy and is known to survive in Italy, Belgium, and Albania. Specialists suspect it is already in Britain and that it will be able to survive because of climate change. It is likely to

have been brought into Britain in used tires brought from the Far East for re-treading. The mosquito likes tires because water collects in the treads, where it lays its eggs. Last year Britain imported 12 million tires from the Far East. The mosquito is known to carry 23 different [arboviruses](#), as well as a worm, the parasitic [Dirofilaria](#), which gets into the lungs and can cause severe lung damage. [View Report](#)

Europe Gasps in Heat That Claims at Least 34 Lives

06 August – Reuters reported Europe is baking in a heat wave that, along with forest fires fanned from the Balkans to the Atlantic, has now killed at least 34 people. More than a week of fires have taken 14 lives in badly hit Portugal, where temperatures inched up toward 40 degrees Celsius (104 F), while neighboring Spain recorded its 13th death from record heat. Germany -- which like most of usually cooler northern Europe has not been spared -- saw three times as much woodland hit by fire as last year. There were five heat-related deaths in one German town alone over the weekend. In Britain the heat claimed its first victims -- two teenage boys who drowned trying to cool off -- and rail passengers faced massive delays as operators slowed down trains for fear that tracks would buckle. Some countries have had above normal temperatures for a month now, in some cases breaking or approaching records, in one of the longest hot spells for years. [View Article](#)

Leptospirosis in Krasnogvardeysk, Russia (Stavropol Region)

01 August - With the return of hot summer days, the infectious disease department of Krasnogvardeysk Central Hospital is receiving more and more patients with a primary diagnosis of [leptospirosis](#). These patients have fever, muscular pain, and other symptoms of acute water-borne fever. All of them had been swimming in local reservoirs where shepherds watered cows and sheep, which are possible transmitters of leptospirosis. 20 people have already been treated since the beginning of summer. According to a local newspaper, Sanitary Epidemiologic Service workers are investigating all reservoirs in Krasnogvardeysk. [View Report](#)

Rate of Echinococcosis in Karachayevo-Cherkesovo 22 Times Higher than in Russian Federation

05 August – ProMed reported high rates of the dangerous parasitic infection [echinococcosis](#) have been observed in Karachayevo-Cherkesovo. The Chief of the parasitology department, N. Melikhova, reported that the incidence rate of echinococcosis is 22 times higher than in the Russian Federation. Though the Ministry of Public Health in Karachayevo-Cherkesovo is not taking any extraordinary measures, specialists claim that if there are no organized centers for diagnosis and treatment of echinococcosis, there is the danger that the disease could spread. [View Report](#)

S. Africa Seen at 'Death' Phase of AIDS Epidemic

04 August – Reuters reported South Africa is entering the "death" phase of its [AIDS](#) epidemic as mortality outstrips new infections, presenting new challenges for a health care system struggling to cope with the disease, scientists said. "South Africa is experiencing a devastating epidemic -- the world's worst -- and this is just the beginning," Quarraisha Abdool Karim, a researcher at the University of Natal, told the country's first national AIDS conference in Durban. South Africa's government is under fresh attack by activists who accuse it of failing to respond adequately to a disease that already infects 4.7 million South Africans, the highest single caseload in the world. [View Article](#)

Spain: *Cryptosporidium* Found in Swimming Pool

30 Jul – ProMed reported an outbreak of a stomach bug has hit Britons at a Majorca hotel. Tests have shown 4 tourists in Spain and 8 back in the UK have been infected by the waterborne parasite [Cryptosporidium](#). Symptoms include severe diarrhea, sickness, stomach cramps, and fever. About 150 tourists at the Hotel Alcludia Pins in Majorca have become unwell. The source of the illness was likely to be the hotel pool, tests suggested. It was subsequently drained and disinfected. Around 150 people have been taken ill with symptoms of diarrhea and vomiting. [View Report](#)

Uganda: Cholera Kills Four in Kasese

31 July – AllAfrica.com reported four more people have died of [cholera](#) in Kasese while about 170 others have been reported infected with the epidemic that seems to defy all efforts to bring it down. Quoting a recent district surveillance report, medical sources at Rukoki said the cumulative figures were 96 and 71 during the weeks ending July 20 and 27 respectively. District officials have blamed the persistence of the disease on lack of latrines and unhygienic conditions in neighboring Kasindi in the DR Congo sides of the border. Mubingwa said latrine coverage in some villages was as low as 0-2%. He said most of the infections originated from neighboring DRC. [View Article](#)

USCENTCOM

Afghanistan: Over 20 Die in Flooding

01 August – IRIN News reported the Afghan government announced that at least 20 people had been reported dead following serious flooding and landslides in the Panjshir valley in the eastern province of Parvan this week. "Over 20 people are reported to have died, while many houses are destroyed," Sultan Ebadi, the director of the Office of Disaster Preparedness (ODP), told IRIN. According to the ODP, the flood was the result of a massive landslide, which destroyed a large dam in the valley. "Our teams are in the area, but unfortunately no assistance has been provided to the victims' families," Ebadi said, noting that the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development had sent some tents, but these had yet to arrive. [View Article](#)

Army Hunts Cause of Pneumonia in Troops

04 August – CNN reported the U.S. Army said it has activated two medical teams to help investigators determine what has caused about 100 cases of [pneumonia](#) -- two of them fatal -- among service members in the Persian Gulf since March 1. A team of two doctors is at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany, where most of the patients have been treated, said Lyn Kukral, a spokeswoman for the Army surgeon general. The second team has been sent to Iraq, where most of the cases occurred, Kukral said. The teams will review patient records and lab results and question health workers and patients to try to determine the cause or causes. No evidence exists that the cases were caused by exposure to chemical or biological weapons, SARS or environmental toxins. Of about 100 patients with pneumonia, 15 required ventilators to help breathe, the Army said. Two of the 15 died, three remain hospitalized and 10 have recovered, the Army said. [View Article](#)

Displacements Causes Sharp Increase in Cholera Cases in Monrovia

31 July – AllAfrica.com reported Liberia's war-torn capital Monrovia is in the grip of serious [cholera](#) epidemic as a result of tens of thousands of people being displaced from their homes and living in conditions of extremely poor sanitation, the medical charity Medecins Sans Frontieres said. MSF said it

had set up three specialist treatment centers for cholera in the city of one million people and these were now treating more than 300 cases per week. The number of cholera cases had soared by mid-July, prompting the Liberian Ministry of Health to officially declare an epidemic, it added. [View Article](#)

Iraq: Virus Spreads through Dutch Troops

29 July – Expatica reported dozens of peacekeeping Dutch soldiers stationed in the south of Iraq have caught a [virus](#) and the Defense Ministry is concerned that the number could increase to about a hundred. There are 700 Dutch soldiers stationed in the war-torn Islamic country as part of the British-led stabilization force. The vulnerability of soldiers to viruses in the Middle Eastern country is due in part to the extreme heat, the different life style encountered, new foods and a higher concentration of viruses in the air. The virus causes vomiting and diarrhea. [View Article](#)

Kazakhstan: Plague Reported in West Kazakhstan in Mangistauk Region

01 August – ProMed reported 5 men were hospitalized in the Mangistauk region of Kazakhstan with suspected [plague](#). They had eaten camel meat. According to the chief sanitary physician of the Republic, first deputy minister of Health Care, Anatoliy Belonog, the diagnosis was confirmed by serology but that they are waiting for the results of bacteriologic analysis. He also reported that 130 people were found who had contact with the plague patients. They are all now hospitalized to prevent spread of infection. The inhabitants of Jangildi & Tauchik villages took part in camel slaughter last week, which is the possible source of the disease. Slaughter and further sale of 180 kg of meat was done without the required veterinary confirmation. Meanwhile, according to Dr. Belonog, 50 kg of meat has already been discovered and withdrawn. Preventive measures are being taken to stop the spread of plague among the population. There are about 320 000 people in the Mangistauk region. An epizootic of plague has been discovered among rodents this year [2003]. [View Report](#)

Kenya: Sterile Tsetse Flies to Be Released in Lambwe Valley

02 August – AllAfrica.com reported researchers will soon release sterilized male tsetse flies into Ruma National Park in Lambwe Valley, Suba District to control [sleeping sickness](#) and [nagana](#). However, Dr Japhet Kiragu, the officer in-charge of the project, said this will only be done after achieving nearly 100 per cent population suppression of flies in the park. Speaking to the East African Standard, Kiragu who is based at the Kenya Trypanosomiasis Research Institute (Ketri) said latest statistics indicate a 70 per cent control. He said the species being targeted is the *Glossina pallidipes* inhabiting Ruma National Park whose males will be rendered sterile through gamma irradiation. [View Article](#)

Kyrgyzstan: Nuclear Dumps Pose Growing Health Threat

30 July – IRIN News reported the mountainous and isolated republic of Kyrgyzstan has suffered greatly from natural disasters this year. But now a new environmental and health threat is emerging in the south: [uranium](#) waste dumps located in areas prone to flooding and landslides. The dumps are posing huge problems in the densely populated Ferghana Valley, home to 10 million people. Although the sites around the town currently present only a low-level threat, the serious danger comes if their highly radioactive cores become exposed. The main enemies are landslides, floods and erosion of soil on the dumps. There are more than 200 places around the town prone to landslides, three of which, named respectively Tectonic, Koi-Tash and Izolit, present the highest potential of sliding. [View Article](#)

USNORTHCOM

Algae Blooms a Growing Problem

04 August – ProMed reported [toxic blue-green algae](#) are turning up increasingly in lakes across North America. Environment Canada has identified the algae as "a growing threat to water quality in Canada and around the world." The algae bloom when warm surface temperatures and calm conditions combine with an abundance of phosphorus in the water from fertilizer or human waste. The organisms produce toxins that can cause serious health effects in humans and can kill dogs. The Vermont Department of Health reported 2 dogs died in 2002 after swallowing algae -- one on the Canadian side of Missisquoi Bay and one on the American side. Quebec is working with Vermont and New York state to find ways of reducing the pollution flowing into the lake. The best way to reduce the risk to humans in the short term is to improve the identification of algae blooms and to avoid all direct contact with the water, e.g., swimming and aquatic activities (note that a wet suit will not protect the skin), do not drink the water and do not use it to prepare or cook food (boiling the water will not eliminate the toxins) and avoid consuming fish or other aquatic species taken from the affected area. Do not let animals drink water or bathe in it. [View Report](#)

Bushmeat: Dinner Or Deadly Disease

01 August – CBS News reported despite the U.S.'s slumping economy, there is one unusual market that has continued to grow — the sale of exotic, and illegal imported meats. The meat fetches a high price from epicureans with adventurous palates, but the trade is risky. The African rodent CBS News was able to buy at an exotic foods store in New York is considered a delicacy in some parts of the world. Wild animals that are killed by poachers in African and Asian jungles have long been sold in foreign markets as so-called "bushmeat." But lately, Fish and Wildlife agents have caught "bushmeat" smugglers sneaking it into the U.S. in their suitcases. The smugglers operate in the same way as drug dealers, coming through U.S. customs without declaring the meat. Bushmeat smugglers have not only exposed a weakness in airport security, they have also revealed a gaping hole in the nation's defenses against deadly viruses. [View Article](#) [View Article 2](#)

FDA Removes Olestra Warning

01 August – MSNBC News reported snacks made with the fake fat olestra no longer will have to bear the unappetizing label that warned they might cause cramps and diarrhea. The Food and Drug Administration lifted the warning Friday, concluding that if the zero-calorie fat substitute has any stomach-troubling effect, it's mild and rare. [View Article](#)

GAO: SARS Virus May Overwhelm Hospitals

30 July – Yahoo reported federal and local health officials are preparing for the possibility of a new [SARS](#) outbreak, yet hospitals may still be overwhelmed because they lack key workers and equipment, congressional investigators report. In a report being released Wednesday, the General Accounting Office warned that in a large-scale outbreak, entire hospital wards and their staffs may be needed as SARS isolation facilities. Or entire hospitals might need to be designated as SARS hospitals. It could lead to "severe overcrowding" at hospitals, particularly if SARS hits during the peak flu season, said the GAO, which is the investigative arm of Congress. Hospitals report that they need more equipment as well as capital improvements such as quarantine and isolation facilities and air handling and filtering equipment. A GAO survey of more than 2,000 hospitals found that few had the equipment and supplies needed to handle a large-scale infectious disease outbreak. [View Article](#) [View GAO Report](#)

Georgia: Outbreak of Viral Meningitis

05 August – ProMed reported a [viral meningitis](#) outbreak has Georgia on track to double the number of cases in a typical year. 300 cases were reported between January and July, whereas in a typical year, 175 cases are recorded in Georgia. Richard Quartarone of Georgia's Public Health Division says the outbreak apparently started in Augusta but has spread to Gainesville and metro Atlanta. The health division put out a call to the media on Monday asking for help in encouragement of hand-washing. Quartarone also cautioned people against sharing utensils or lip balm, especially during July and August, when viruses carried in the digestive system are typically at their peaks. [View Report](#)

Local Transmission of *P. vivax* Malaria Suspected in Florida

04 August – ProMed reported there were 2 cases of [malaria](#) in Palm Beach County reported recently. The recent pair of cases in Lake Worth have touched off a massive local campaign of spraying and warnings to local people, to stay indoors at dawn and dusk, use [DEET](#)-based mosquito repellent if they must venture outside, and remove any standing water on their property. Some 35,000 households in a 9-square-mile area will be alerted to beware of mosquitoes. The 2 recent cases are probably *Plasmodium vivax* and most likely came from a mosquito that bit someone coming here from outside the U.S., then transmitted the parasite. [View Report](#)

More U.S. Children Vaccinated Than Ever

31 July – Reuters reported more U.S. children are being vaccinated than ever before but holes remain that put babies and small children at risk of deadly disease, according to a survey released. Southwestern and northwestern states have the worst record on vaccinating kids, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention survey found. Unvaccinated children are vulnerable to disease and can serve as "reservoirs" for continued outbreaks. The survey of parents of 21,000 U.S. children found that overall, 75 percent got their full quota of vaccines against eight deadly childhood diseases -- [diphtheria](#), [measles](#), [mumps](#), [whooping cough](#), [polio](#), [rubella or German measles](#), [tetanus](#) and diseases caused by Hemophilus influenza bacteria. This compares to 73.7 percent in 2001 and levels below 70 percent in the 1960s. [View Article](#) [View CDC Report](#)

Report Suggests High PCB Levels in Farmed Salmon

30 July – The Washington Post reported a sharp rise in the consumption of farmed salmon may be posing a health threat to millions of Americans because of high levels of [PCBs](#) that have been found in limited samples of the popular fish, according to a study. Diet- and health-conscious Americans have turned to salmon in recent years, and about 23 million people eat the fish more than once a month. But a study by the Environmental Working Group found that 7 of 10 farmed salmon recently purchased at grocery stores in the District, San Francisco and Portland, Ore., contained concentrations of PCBs that were 16 times higher than those found in wild salmon fished from the ocean and roughly four times higher than those in beef and other seafood. PCBs, which were used as industrial insulators, are persistent in the environment and have been linked to cancer and impaired fetal brain development. [View Article](#)

U.S. Worried by Native Americans' High Diabetes Rate

31 July – Reuters reported [diabetes](#) has reached near epidemic levels among Native American adults, and the number of preventable injury-related deaths remains disproportionately high for youth on reservations, the federal government reported. Dr. Craig Vanderwagen, chief medical officer for the Indian Health Service, said the erosion of native culture and family support systems might be helping to fuel these worrying health trends in American Indian and Alaska Native communities. An estimated 15.3

percent of American native adults had been diagnosed with diabetes in 2002, according to the CDC. Approximately one-third of natives 55 years and older had the disease last year. [View Article](#)

West Nile Virus Heads West

01 August – CBS News reported the [West Nile Virus](#) used to be a problem for states in the east, but recently the disease has spread to central states. And it is pushing towards the west coast — with over a dozen cases reported in Colorado. Health officials are gearing up for a severe season of infection. The West Nile Virus first appeared in New York City in 1999, and it has since slowly spread across the country every summer. In 2002, there were nearly 4,000 reported cases of West Nile Virus human infection and 284 deaths, with the virus reaching 44 states. There were also 23 cases nationwide that West Nile was passed on through a blood transfusion and four cases in which organ recipients contracted the virus. [View Article](#)

USPACOM

Dengue Fever Update for PACOM Countries

04 August - There have been 9 confirmed [dengue fever](#) cases in Malaysia including one death in Bukit Mertajam, said state Health, Welfare and Caring Society Committee chairman Datuk Dr K. Rajapathy. He said 5 cases were in the vicinity of Jalan Pegawai and the nearby wet market and another 4 cases in Taman Makok. He said the death of a 37-year-old market trader on 23 Jul 2003 was the second such death in the state in 2003. The situation concerning dengue hemorrhagic fever in Thailand remains serious, with more than 30,000 people infected -- 32 of whom have died -- over the past 7 months. According to Ministry statistics, over the past 7 months the number of people struck down by the virus was highest in the Central region, which saw 12,716 cases. Of these, 10 have died. While there were fewer cases in the Northeast (11,745), there were more deaths, with 16 people succumbing to the virus. In the North, there were 4,922 cases with 5 deaths, while in the South, 4,127 people were infected, and 4 died. Cairns, Australia is facing one of the worst dengue fever outbreaks on record with more than 450 people contracting the disease since March 2003. Health workers are fearful of a surge in cases during the summer months as the wet season looms, traditionally the best breeding season for the dengue mosquito. Cairns health officials have sought help from other cities as they work to contain the virus. [View Report](#)

Japan: Transmission of Hepatitis E Virus from Wild Sika Deer to Humans

01 August – ProMED reported zoonotic transmission of [hepatitis E virus \(HEV\)](#) has been suggested for various animals, on the basis of indirect evidence. Shuchin Tei and colleagues have identified potential zoonotic transmission of HEV from Japanese Sika deer. Over several weeks members of 2 human families developed hepatitis symptoms, but were negative for [hepatitis A, B, and C viruses](#). Physicians discovered the patients had eaten raw meat several times from deer caught in the wild in the 7 weeks preceding the first hospital admission. HEV RNA sequences in the meat of one deer and most of the patients' samples were 100 percent identical. Shuchin Tei and colleagues conclude that this finding is direct evidence of zoonotic HEV transmission. However, they believe consumption of substantial amounts of raw deer meat is necessary for transmission, since eating only a little did not lead to infection in other family members. [View Report](#) [View Report 2](#)

USSOUTHCOM

Dengue Fever Update for USSOUTHCOM Countries

04 August – ProMed reported in Panama, Evaristo Gonzalez, Regional Health Director, stated that the sanitary alert imposed by the Health Ministry is being maintained in the province of Chiriqui as a result of the detection of new cases of [dengue fever](#) and malaria. According to Gonzalez, 17 new cases of classic dengue fever have been detected in Chiriqui, with the districts of David, Bugaba, and Baru being the most affected. The official explained that the alert was declared because in previous years no cases of dengue had been registered during this time of the year. Due to these circumstances, health authorities imposed a series of strategies to control the contagion. In Costa Rica, 6,456 persons have been treated for Dengue Fever so far this year. The clinical presentation of the current cases is much more severe. That is, that the blood platelet count is much lower than before, indicating that these patients are victims of a second dengue infection. This year, the Central Pacific (Puntarenas) region has been the most affected, with 2,409 cases, followed by the area of La Chorotega, particularly Santa Cruz, Carrillo, and Nicoya, with 2,224 cases, and the Huetar Atlantica region (Limon), with 1,131 cases. To date, there have been 11 cases of dengue hemorrhagic fever. In Brazil, so far in 2003, the disease has affected 18,459 persons, with 12,687 cases originating in 163 municipalities of the interior of the country, and 5,772 cases originating in the capital. There have been 244 cases of dengue hemorrhagic fever. The increase in the number of cases is due to the introduction of dengue virus type 3 and its propagation through 23 municipalities. 593 samples of blood for viral isolation were collected from 37 municipalities. Dengue virus type 3 was isolated from 136 samples from 23 of the 37 municipalities. [View Report](#)

El Salvador Faces 'Calamity' as Pneumonia Deaths Climb

02 August – The Houston Chronicle reported while the world has been crusading against [SARS](#), the syndrome's less-exotic cousin, [pneumonia](#), has killed 430 people so far this year in two small Central American nations. Health Minister Jose Lopez Beltran said Friday that a 1-year-old girl had become the 305th death from pneumonia this year in El Salvador. Seventy-eight of those deaths were among children under the age of 5. Neighboring Nicaragua earlier this week reported 125 pneumonia-related deaths, though unlike El Salvador, it did not seem to have suffered an increase over previous years. El Salvador's Congress decreed a "state of calamity" two weeks ago, allowing the health ministry to use any funds necessary to combat the rise in pneumonia. In a recent bulletin, the Pan American Health Organization said researchers were trying to find the cause of the surge in pneumonia cases in the country. [View Article](#)

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POC: Rachel Gross, PhD
Rachel.Gross@APG.amedd.army.mil

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

Approved:

[Kevin Delaney](#)

Chief, Health Information Operations
(410) 436-5217 or DSN 584-5217