

USACHPPM
HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE

31 October 2003

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

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HOT TOPICS

Artificial Blood a Success

23 October – News.com.au reported Swedish doctors have for the first time successfully used artificial blood to treat patients with a method they hope will eventually help revolutionize health care, they said today. The artificial blood is made from real blood that has been donated but which normally only has a shelf life of 42 days. Now, instead of throwing that blood away after 42 days, doctors are able to use the red blood cells to produce a powder that can be stored for several years. The powder can then be mixed into liquid form when needed, for example at the scene of an accident, and used immediately regardless of the patient's blood type. Pierre LaFolie, chief physician at Stockholm's Karolinska Hospital, said that if artificial blood were approved for use it could lead to dramatic changes in health care. LaFolie said synthetic blood could save time after an accident, noting that the blood would not need to be tested before being given to a patient and could be administered directly at the scene. The synthetic blood has also been shown to transport oxygen through the body better than real blood, which can help limit damage to the body, for example during a heart attack. The synthetic blood has been developed by researchers in the United States - the exact process for developing it has been kept secret - and it has been tested for the first time on eight patients at Karolinska Hospital.

[View Article](#)

Boost in Exercise Reduces Stroke Risk

27 October – CNN News reported the more physical activity a person does, the lower the risk of a [stroke](#), a review of 23 international studies finds. "Reduction in stroke risk is another reason to participate in regular and moderate-to-high intensity physical activity," said the report in the October edition of the American Heart Association journal Stroke. It's known that exercise reduces the risk of heart disease, the leading cause of death in the United States. But researchers have done less work on stroke, the third-leading cause. The researchers drew data from some of the largest examinations of the effects of physical activity on health. Among these are the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and three databases run by Harvard University researchers, which followed male doctors, female nurses and male Harvard alumni. These studies previously had helped to establish the benefit of exercise against heart disease. [View Article](#)

Daily Aspirin Use Linked with Pancreatic Cancer

27 October – Reuters reported women who take an aspirin a day -- which millions do to prevent [heart attack](#) and [stroke](#) as well as to treat headaches -- may raise their risk of getting deadly [pancreatic cancer](#), U.S. researchers said. The surprising finding worried doctors, who say

women will now have to talk seriously with their physicians about the risk of taking a daily aspirin. Pancreatic cancer affects only 31,000 Americans a year, but it kills virtually all its victims within three years. The study of 88,000 nurses found that those who took two or more aspirins a week for 20 years or more had a 58 percent higher risk of pancreatic cancer. [View Article](#)

Green Tea Beneficial vs. Cancer

29 October – The Arizona Republic reported four research papers presented at the American Association for Cancer Research conference in Phoenix suggest green tea is useful in fighting certain types of cancer, in addition to lowering cholesterol, preventing heart disease, boosting oral hygiene and possibly aiding in weight loss. Drinking just two cups, but probably more like four cups, a day of green tea may retard the growth of certain tumor cells, researchers agreed. Iman Hakim, a researcher at the University of Arizona Cancer Center, showed that cigarette smokers who drank four cups a day of decaffeinated green tea for four months cut the cellular damage caused by cigarettes. Other research presented Tuesday by Jia-Sheng Wang, from Texas Tech University, showed green tea can prevent [liver cancer](#), the third-leading cause of cancer deaths in the world. And Nurulain Zaveri, a researcher at SRI International in Menlo Park, Calif., found that green tea may not only prevent cancer but may become a treatment for those with the disease. But researchers reminded cancer patients to consult with their doctors before consuming large quantities of the tea because it could interact with other treatments or chemotherapy. [View Report](#)

IAEA Fights Malaria-Carrying Mosquitoes with Nuclear Technology

23 October – VOA News reported the International Atomic Energy Agency is using nuclear technology in a project designed to eliminate [malaria](#)-carrying mosquitoes from Africa. One of the jobs of the IAEA, besides hunting for banned nuclear weapons, is promoting peaceful uses of atomic energy. "In its malaria project, IAEA scientists are doing tests in northern Sudan and on the island of Reunion in the Indian Ocean, aimed at wiping out mosquitoes carrying malaria. The male insects are transported to laboratories at Seibersdorf, near Vienna, and there they are sterilized by being exposed to large doses of gamma radiation. Alan Robinson heads the research at Seibersdorf. "It is a method, which uses sterility as a sort of birth control for insects, so the principle is to, in a large facility, to rear large numbers of insects, to sterilize them with radiation and release them in the field," he said. "If those released insects fertilize or mate with insects in the field they sterilize them." Scientists say repeated releases should eventually lead to eradication of the malaria-carrying mosquito. The technique, they say, is more effective than insecticides. [View Article](#)

Study Finds Marker Predicts Heart Trouble Better Than Cholesterol Levels

27 October – Health Day News reported a new phrase may soon be added to the vocabulary of heart-conscious Americans: apolipoprotein B. Blood levels of apolipoprotein B (ApoB) can be a better indicator of [heart disease](#) risk than the currently standard marker, LDL cholesterol (the "bad" kind that clogs arteries), says a report in the Oct. 28 issue of *Circulation*. That report describes the results of blood tests and other measures of heart risk among 1,522 people in the Insulin Resistance Atherosclerosis Study, which examines the link between abnormal blood sugar metabolism and the development of heart disease. Researchers measured levels of both LDL cholesterol and ApoB, which is a sub-unit of the LDL molecule. They also measured several other known risk factors for heart disease -- obesity, the inflammation-related molecule

called C-reactive protein, clot-inducing molecules and insulin levels. "In each statistically comparison, the elevated ApoB group had higher associated risk than the elevated LDL cholesterol group," the researchers report. [View Article](#)

New Drug Hope for Millions of Hepatitis C Victims

26 October – Reuters reported a new drug that prevents a contagious virus from duplicating in the body could be a new weapon against [hepatitis C](#), a disease that could kill more people than AIDS, scientists said. More than 170 million people around the globe are infected with the virus that can cause permanent liver damage and in many cases death. There is no vaccine against the hepatitis C virus (HVC) and current treatments can cause unwanted side effects. But scientists working for the German drugs giant Boehringer Ingelheim have developed a drug that could offer new hope to patients with the illness. Called BILN 2061, the drug targets an enzyme to block the replication of the virus. In eight people given four doses of the treatment, viral loads, or the amount of virus in the blood, dropped by 100 to 1,000 fold after 48 hours without producing any unpleasant reactions in the patients. [View Article](#)

Prenatal Calcium May Lower Kids' Blood Pressure

24 October - Reuters reported calcium supplements taken by a woman during pregnancy could have a lasting benefit for her child's blood pressure, new study findings suggest. Researchers found that toddlers whose mothers took calcium supplements while they were pregnant had lower blood pressure than those whose moms did not. The investigators say such calcium intake may help "program" fetal blood pressure, possibly with effects that persist into adulthood. In the study, reported in the American Journal of Hypertension, one group of pregnant women took 2,000 milligrams (mg) of calcium per day starting in the second trimester up until delivery, and another took a placebo. Hatton's team measured blood pressure in 260 of the children at the age of 3 months, and in 57 at age 2. Infants born to women who took calcium supplements had lower systolic blood pressure than those whose mothers took an inactive placebo pill. By age 2, the difference was even greater. [View Report](#)

Red Wine Could Be Good for Your Lungs, Doctors Say

27 October – Reuters reported red wine, already thought to be good for your heart, may be good for your lungs too, doctors say. A compound found naturally in red wine could help fight chronic bronchitis and emphysema, a study has found, although scientists say there is probably not enough of the stuff in a glass for chronic sufferers to drink their way to good health. The study found that the substance, resveratrol, which is found in the skin of red grapes, could reduce the amount of harmful chemicals in the lungs that cause the diseases. [View Article](#)

Remedy 'Cures Arsenic Poisoning'

27 October – BBC News reported scientists in India believe they may have found a cheap and effective cure for arsenic poisoning. Tests on mice suggest the homeopathic remedy arsenicum album can reduce the liver damage caused by the poison. The remedy which costs just a few dollars is sometimes used by people suffering from anxiety or depression. But researchers at the University of Kalyani say their tests show it may also have a role in treating people who have been exposed to arsenic. Researchers tested the homeopathic remedy on mice which had been exposed to arsenic. They found that a drop of arsenicum album three times a day reduced

arsenic levels in the mice dramatically in just 72 hours. Millions of people around the world are at risk of arsenic poisoning through contaminated water or food. [View Article](#)

Smoking Increases Risk of Multiple Sclerosis -Study

27 October – Reuters reported smokers are up to three times as likely to develop [multiple sclerosis](#) as nonsmokers, researchers said. Researchers at the University of Bergen in Norway and Harvard University in Massachusetts surveyed 22,000 people aged 40 to 47 from 1997 to 1999 and found the risk of developing multiple sclerosis nearly three times higher for men who smoked and about two times higher for women smokers than for their nonsmoking counterparts. [View Article](#)

Stress Hinders Wound-healing Process

24 October – The Times of India reported wounds of patients, who are under stress due to surgery, take a longer time to heal, says a new Kiwi study published in the September/October issue of *Psychosomatic Medicine*. According to the researchers from the University of Auckland, New Zealand, the study is the first to examine the effects of stress on wound healing in clinical settings. Dr. Keith J. Petrie and his colleagues examined the levels of several repair proteins in wound fluid drained from a small group of hernia patients after their operations, including inflammatory proteins that recruit clean-up cells to the site and enzymes that chew up damaged tissue to make way for new growth. It was found that patients who said they were stressed before the operation had significantly lower levels of the inflammatory protein interleukin-1 in their wound fluid. Those who were specifically worried about the operation had lower levels of the enzyme MMP-9. "Stress related to the surgery itself, rather than general stress or anxiety, seem to be the culprit," Petrie said. [View Article](#)

UN-backed Meeting Examines Role of Males in Preventing Spread of HIV/AIDS

23 October – The UN News Centre reported in preparation for a first-time debate next March on the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality, a group of UN-appointed experts have met in Brazil to examine the role of males in preventing the spread of [HIV/AIDS](#) and promoting equality in work, according to the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW). At its 48th session in March 2004 and for the first time, the UN Committee on the Status of Women will have these topics on its agenda and a report on the 21 to 24 October conference in Brasilia will contribute to the discussion, DAW said. "Ideologies of masculinity and 'manliness,' which encourage men to display sexual prowess by having multiple partners, by stressing aggressiveness and dominance and lack of responsibility in sexual relationships, put men themselves and their partners at risk," it said in a news release. [View Article](#)

USEUCOM

Nigeria Polio Vaccines Safe and Untainted, Says WHO

27 October – VOA News reported the World Health Organization says [polio](#) vaccines it is using in Nigeria are safe and untainted. Islamic clerics in the states of Kaduna, Kano, and Zamfara suspended the polio immunization programs on Sunday, claiming the vaccine is unsafe. The Nigerian Islamic clerics say the vaccine used in WHO's polio campaign is contaminated with substances that can cause HIV/AIDS, cancers, and sterility in women. The Head of WHO's Global Polio Eradication Program, David Heymann, said he has been aware of these concerns for the last three or four weeks. He said he has made several trips to the area, and has looked at the vaccines that the Islamic groups reject as unsafe. "I have to say that our vaccines are pure vaccines, provided by UNICEF to countries working on polio eradication, and the same vaccines are used throughout the world. So, we are sure that these vaccines are pure. We understand that there have been some findings that might suggest that there would be elements of hormones, female hormones or family planning elements in the vaccine. But, our studies have not shown that to be the case. All the vaccine comes from manufacturers who are pre-qualified by WHO," he said. [View Article](#)

Norway Gets Tough on Smoking

24 October – BBC News reported Norway is to be one of the first countries in the world to bring in a national ban on smoking in restaurants, bars and cafes. As a campaign is launched to prepare the Norwegian public for the change, Dr Gro Harlem Bruntland, the country's former premier and until recently, the head of the World Health Organization, has challenged ministers in Britain to become more bold with their anti-smoking laws. The aim of the Norwegian ban is not only to protect staff that work in these establishments from the harmful effects of passive smoking, but also to "de-normalise" smoking as a social pastime. It will come into force next summer - some consolation for smokers who will have to take their habit outside and puff away in temperatures of minus 20 degrees during the harsh Scandinavian winters. Other countries like Ireland and the Netherlands are on course to follow Norway's lead. [View Article](#)

Zimbabwean Authorities Report Anthrax Outbreak.

24 October – ProMed reported agriculture officials in Zimbabwe Thursday reported an outbreak of [anthrax](#) in the north of the country, saying both humans and livestock had been affected. Chief government veterinary officer Stuart Hargreaves said the disease broke out in the northern district of Chiweshe, adding that control teams had quarantined the area and had begun mass vaccination of cattle. Veterinary officials said scores of cattle had died, and people infected are suspected to have consumed meat from the dead animals. Veterinary officials in Chiweshe said they suspected the anthrax outbreak stemmed from the illegal movement of cattle by people being resettled under the government's controversial land policies. [View Report](#)

USCENTCOM

Kenya to Produce Bacteria to Fight Mosquito

24 October – Reuters reported Kenya plans to open Africa's first factory dedicated to the production of bacterial pesticides to help tackle [malaria](#), one of the continent's biggest killers, an international research body said on Friday. The disease kills about 3,000 children a day and costs the world's poorest continent around \$12 billion a year. The International Center of Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE) said the \$1.5 million dollar facility would be operational within six weeks. The factory will produce seven to eight tons of liquid *Bacillus thuringiensis var. israelensis* (Bti) annually. The pesticide, which can be sprayed on water and plants, is lethal to malaria-carrying mosquitoes. It has been around for 20 years but has not been used extensively in Africa because of its high cost. Producing the pesticide in Kenya will reduce its cost to a third. [View Report](#)

Leishmania in US Troops from Iraq, Kuwait, & Afghanistan

24 October – The CDC has published a report that provides preliminary data about 22 cases of [CL \[cutaneous leishmaniasis\]](#) in military personnel deployed during 2002-2003 to 3 countries in Southwest/Central Asia (Afghanistan, Iraq, and Kuwait). The patients were evaluated and treated at Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC) in the District of Columbia during August 2002-September 2003. The entire report can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5242a1.htm>

Typhoid Outbreak Hits Tajik Capital, Over 500 Sick

24 October – ProMed reported more than 500 people have fallen ill with [typhoid](#) in Tajikistan's capital Dushanbe, and authorities are struggling to limit the spread of the disease. An official said that the ministry has recorded 551 cases of typhoid in Dushanbe so far in 2003, up from 490 cases recorded during the same period in 2002. Infectious diseases caused by poor sanitation are common in Tajikistan, an agrarian, mountainous central Asian state of 6 million which remains the poorest ex-Soviet nation after years of civil war. Infections, however, usually occur in rural areas. The official said medical experts were inspecting water reservoirs in the city of around 1 million. Dushanbe residents are advised to tighten personal hygiene and use boiled water. [View Report](#)

UN Agency's Afghan Housing Program Intensifies in Advance of Winter

24 October – The UN News Centre reported a scheme to rebuild homes for thousands of returning refugees in Afghanistan has been stepped up in a bid to beat the country's usually bitter winter, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) said. But the plan's progress is being hampered by the lack of locally available building materials, the inadequate roads used to transport the materials, and security problems in many rural areas, the UN agency said. A spokesman for UNHCR, Peter Kessler, said today in Geneva that 13,000 homes

have been built so far and another 27,000 are under construction. The UNHCR-funded initiative has the goal of building 52,000 homes this year for around 270,000 refugees. [View Article](#)

USNORTHCOM

Arizona: Early Detection of Influenza

22 October – ProMed reported a confirmed case of [influenza](#) in Tucson is the 1st in Arizona, and the earliest influenza seen in Pima County in more than 15 years, say county health officials. Whether that means they're in for an especially bad influenza season -- after 2 very mild years -- is unknown. But warnings of a potentially severe outbreak nationwide have been issued, based on high influenza case numbers seen elsewhere in the world this summer. The Tucson case occurred in a teenager resident in north-central Tucson. The patient did not have to be hospitalized, but was tested and reported by a private physician. [View Report](#)

California Fires Prompt Health Concerns

27 October – ABC News reported the wildfire smoke that has left millions of Southern Californians with scratchy throats and burning eyes poses an even bigger health threat to the young, the elderly and anyone with heart or lung problems, officials warned. Anyone who can see, taste or smell smoke should curtail outdoor activity, officials warned. But people with heart disease, lung disease or asthma should avoid the outdoors entirely, as should children and the elderly, said Dr. Jonathan Fielding, public health officer for Los Angeles County. Schools were urged to limit outdoor sports. Health officials were uncertain about the long-term effects of the smoke. It was also unclear whether it would contribute to a short-term rise in deaths, Fielding said. [View Article](#)

CDC Health Advisory: Ricin Found in South Carolina Postal Facility

24 October – The CDC reported the United States Postal Service, in conjunction with federal and state law enforcement and public health officials, identified an unmarked and sealed envelope containing a threatening note and a sealed container believed to contain a toxic substance at a small postal handling facility in Greenville, South Carolina. The Department of Health and Human Services' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) confirmed that the substance was the toxin [Ricin](#). The facility was closed and CDC conducted environmental testing. The results of the environmental testing were negative for the presence of Ricin. There are no indications of employee exposure or of adverse health effects as a result of this incident. A criminal investigation by the FBI and US Postal Inspection Service is currently underway. [View Report](#)

Florida: Flesh-Eating Infection Strikes Fishermen, Surfer in Volusia County

23 October – ProMed reported several fishermen and at least one surfer in Volusia County, FL, have reportedly contracted the flesh eating form of [methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus or MRSA](#). Doctor Jeff Parks, an Ormond Beach dermatologist, said he has treated 8 patients, including 2 who were hospitalized, in the last 2 months with the painful and contagious crater-

like lesions. Parks says the disease has been found in patients who had been in the ocean. Bacterial infections are common among commercial fishermen and others who handle fish. But Parks says he is perplexed about why so many people contracted this particular strain of bacteria. A surfer was also recently treated after MRSA, entered his body through an open wound as he swam in the Atlantic Ocean. MRSA bacteria create the same life-threatening lesions experts are treating on turtles and fish in Central Florida. [View Report](#)

Influenza Season Strikes Early in Western Canada

28 October – ProMed reported the [influenza](#) season has hit Canada early, clogging emergency rooms in Edmonton and prompting calls from health officials across the country for people to get immunized as soon as possible. The region said yesterday it is fast-tracking its annual winter plan to open dozens more hospital beds to cope with the influenza crunch, and urged patients to visit their family doctors or call provincial health-care phone lines to ease the pressure at hospitals. But Capital Health spokesman Ed Greenberg said people should continue to go to emergency rooms if they think they need urgent care. The influenza season normally occurs between November and March, with peaks in late December and again in late February. But it emerged in some parts of Canada and the U.S. weeks ago, long before influenza vaccination clinics became active. In the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region, the first case of influenza was reported on 1 Oct 2003, and to date there have been 82 confirmed cases. During 2002, the first case wasn't reported until December. According to the most recent statistics, Alberta had 105 confirmed cases as of 18 Oct 2003, compared to none by that date last year. According to the U.S. National Center for Infectious Diseases, as of 22 Oct 2003, influenza activity was widespread in Texas and sporadic in Arizona, Arkansas, Louisiana, Nebraska, and New York. [View Report](#)

Pentagon Ignored Rules to Check Soldiers' Health

29 October The Star-Ledger reported congress will investigate whether soldiers sent to Iraq received mandatory health assessments, a concern raised by the disclosure that the Pentagon widely ignored proper medical procedures for those sent earlier to Afghanistan and Kosovo. Rep. Chris Smith (R-4th Dist.), chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, said yesterday the General Accounting Office uncovered a "shocking" failure by the Department of Defense to follow the health screening and immunization rules for active-duty soldiers deployed overseas from 2001 through mid-2002. He said this lapse may have been repeated for those sent to fight in Iraq, and his committee requested a new, comprehensive probe by the GAO, the investigation arm of Congress. In a report released this month, the GAO warned the Pentagon's failure to conduct health assessments for active-duty soldiers before deployment and after returning home from the former Yugoslav province of Kosovo and from Afghanistan could lead to a repeat of the Persian Gulf War experience. During a recent congressional hearing on veterans health care, Edward Wyatt Jr., principal deputy assistant secretary of defense for health affairs, acknowledged the past lapses but said the health screenings have now become a "high priority." [View Article](#) [View GAO Report](#)

Ricketts Makes a Comeback

27 October – CBS News reported millions of Americans may not get enough vitamin D, a nutrient important for strong bones. It is a problem made worse in the winter, when the sun's rays are not intense enough in most of the country to help bodies make the sunshine vitamin.

Substituting food can be difficult because of a lack of vitamin D-rich options. Already doctors are urging that breast-fed babies get vitamin D supplements to fend off a shocking return of [rickets](#), a soft-bone disease, most often seen in children, that was thought eliminated decades ago. With increasing evidence that adults too may lack the nutrient, scientists are debating whether it is time to pump up everybody's level of vitamin D. [View Article](#)

Sick Army Reservists Will Be Moved, Official Says

25 October – The Washington Post reported the Army's top civilian official said Saturday that sick reservists living in Fort Stewart barracks without air conditioning or indoor toilets will be moved to better housing -- and some might be sent to other military bases if that means they could get faster medical care. Some say they have waited months for surgeries and doctor appointments while Fort Stewart struggles to care for more than 20,000 active-duty and reserve troops who recently returned from Iraq. Fort Stewart commanders planned to move the sick soldiers into barracks that have air conditioning and indoor toilets, and were bringing in new medical case managers to Winn Army Community Hospital to help move reservists through the health system. Another option being studied is moving the soldiers to other bases. [View Report](#)

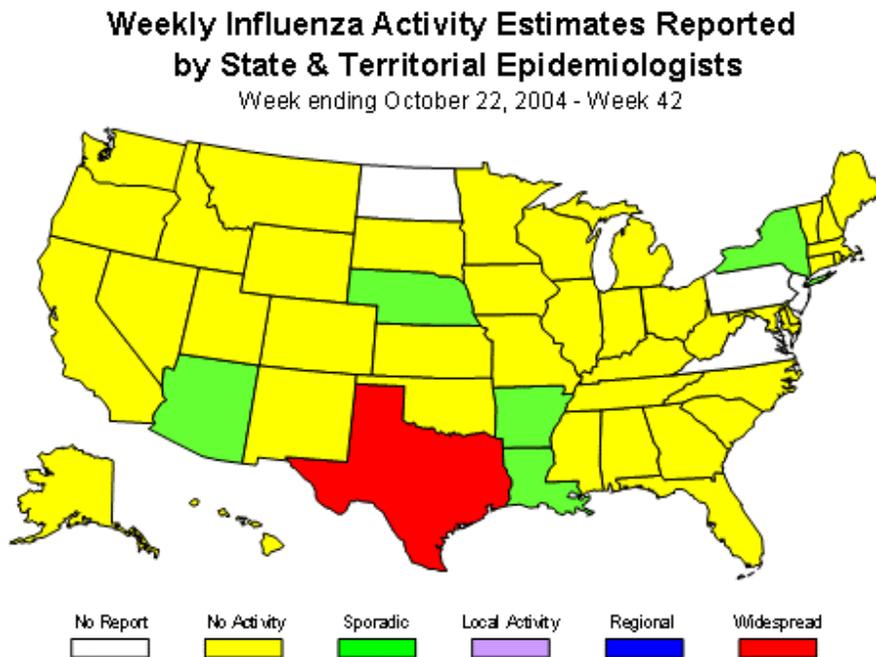
Texas: Flu Season Arrives Early This Year

17 October – The Herald Coaster reported with an abnormally high number of [influenza](#) cases being reported unusually early in the year, the Texas Department of Health issued a flu advisory. Dozens of cases have been diagnosed in Central and Southeast Texas. An Associated Press wire report said this marks the first time since 1991 that flu has hit Houston in October. That year, the first case was reported in the last week of the month. This year, it struck in the first week of the month. In addition to Harris County, reported the Houston Area Health Alert Network, positive rapid flu test results have also been reported in Bell, Brazos, Jefferson, Montgomery, Nolan, Smith, Travis and Williamson counties. Texas Department of Health officials said Center for Disease Control analyses confirms the majority of flu strains are covered by this year's flu vaccine, and suggested community vaccination efforts be accelerated. In addition, persons who catch the flu are urged to stay home to avoid infecting classmates or colleagues. It takes about two weeks for the vaccine to be effective. [View Article](#)

Texas: Officials Following Up on Bacteria Detection

23 October – ProMed reported city and county health officials are following up on the detection by air sensors of low levels of parts of the bacterium that causes [tularemia](#). Health officials said that though the bacteria are found naturally in the environment, precautionary measures are being taken to determine whether there have been any human cases of tularemia, commonly known as rabbit fever, in the area. So far none have been found. Low levels of the organism were detected by laboratory tests done on filters taken from special air monitors on Sat, Sun and Mon, 4-6 Oct 2003. However, filters tested from the 2 following days were negative. Precautionary measures being taken by the City of Houston's Health and Human Services Department and Harris County Public Health and Environmental Services include increased surveillance for human illness, additional environmental sampling, collection and testing of wild rabbits and rodents, and an assessment of activities in the area that may have caused the sensors to pick up the organism. The air sensors are part of a nationwide BioWatch system inaugurated in March 2003 to monitor for intentionally released bacterial agents but may detect naturally occurring organisms. [View Report](#)

United States Influenza Activity



USPACOM

Epidemiology and Cause of SARS in Guangdong, Nov 2002 to Feb 2003

27 October – ProMed reported The Lancet has published the results of an investigation of the epidemiology and cause of [severe acute respiratory syndrome \(SARS\)](#) in Guangdong, People's Republic of China by research workers based at several institutions in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, and at the University of Hong Kong, University Pathology Building, Queen Mary Hospital, Pokfulam, Hong Kong SAR. This publication includes a map of the geographical distribution of SARS cases in Guangdong province from Nov 2002 to Feb 2003. The full text is accessible online at

http://www.thelancet.com/journal/vol362/iss9393/full/llan.362.9393.original_r. If you do not subscribe to The Lancet, the discussion section, which provides a balanced summary of the results of the investigation, can be accessed at [ProMed](#)

Sri Lanka: Rat Fever on the Rise

24 October – ProMed reported Epidemiology Unit officials, Wed 22 Oct 2003, urged the public to refrain from working on moist surfaces and wading in muddy water to avoid contracting a rapidly spreading disease -- [leptospirosis](#), also known as Rat Fever. The disease occurs in cycles and becomes widespread immediately after heavy rains. There were fewer than 200

cases per year prior to 1991, but the annual number has gradually assumed near-epidemic proportions in the ensuing years, rising to around 1,200 suspected cases in 1994, and peaking at nearly 1,500 cases since then. This year, as of October, around 2,200 suspected cases have been detected. The disease had formerly been widespread in areas such as Moneragala, Ampara, Matara, and in the North Western province and Galle. However, at present it has spread to areas on the outskirts of Colombo including Kaduwela, Homagama, and Mirigama. Doctors are closely monitoring the progress of the disease to prevent it from infecting city dwellers. [View Report](#)

USSOUTHCOM

Nothing Significant to report.

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

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