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HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE

26 March 2004

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

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HOT TOPICS

Excess Body Weight Linked to Formation of Uric Acid Kidney Stones

22 March – Eurekalert reports researchers at UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas have found that the more overweight a person is the more at risk he or she is for forming [uric acid kidney stones](#). These findings for the first time directly link excess body weight with uric acid kidney stones, found in about 5 percent of kidney-stone patients and in about 30 percent of diabetics with kidney stones. An estimated 10 percent of people in the United States will have a kidney stone some time in their lives. Small stones may pass out of the body naturally, but a larger stone can get stuck in a ureter, the bladder or the urethra, possibly blocking the flow of urine and often causing intense pain. Uric acid kidney stones develop when the urine's acid level is too high, typically from the ingestion of too much dietary animal protein or when there are insufficient amounts of buffers to neutralize acid in the urine. The latest study, which included researchers at the University of Chicago, tracked nearly 5,000 kidney-stone patients in Dallas and Chicago. Results did not vary between men and women, or for patients who restricted the types of foods eaten. [View Source](#)

Herbal Supplements/Meds Not That Dangerous a Mix

23 March – Health Day News reported most potential interactions between drugs and dietary supplements are not serious, says a University of Pittsburgh study in the March 22 issue of the Archives of Internal Medicine. The use of dietary supplements, also called herbal supplements, is common among people taking prescription drugs. Concerns have been raised about possible dangerous interactions. This study of 458 outpatients visiting general medicine clinics at two Veterans Affairs medical centers in Pittsburgh and Los Angeles found that drug-dietary supplement interactions were not serious in 94 percent of the patient population studied. During the study, the patients were asked about their dietary supplement use. Researchers cross-referenced that with information about the patients' prescription drug use. Potential interactions were identified from medical searches and other sources. [View Article](#)

'Hidden Hunger' Weakens Physical, Economic Health

24 March – The Globe reported as many as two billion people worldwide suffer from vitamin and mineral deficiencies that are undermining their physical and mental health and hampering economic growth in the developing world. This "hidden hunger" -- deficiencies in micronutrients such as iron, iodine, vitamin A, folic acid and zinc -- causes the deaths of one million children, severe birth defects in 250,000 babies and mental impairment in another 20 million children each year, according to a report by UNICEF and the Micronutrient Initiative. "We are here dealing with a global problem of

enormous importance that is as yet little recognized," Venkatesh Mannar, president of the Ottawa-based Micronutrient Initiative, said in an interview yesterday. "So ubiquitous is vitamin and mineral deficiency that it debilitates on some significant degree the energies, intellects and economic prospects of nations." But he said the knowledge and technology exist to resolve these problems for only pennies a person, meaning "there is probably no greater opportunity today to improve lives and accelerate development at such a low cost and in such a short time." [View Article](#)

Human Trials of New Anti-HIV Gels Announced

23 March – Reuters reports British scientists are planning large-scale human trials of two new gels designed to prevent men and women from being infected with the virus that causes [AIDS](#). The gels, or microbicides, act like an invisible condom and could offer added protection against the virus that has infected 40 million people worldwide. AIDS experts estimate that even a partially effective microbicide could prevent 2.5 million deaths from AIDS over three years. Condoms are the best method to prevent HIV infection but not everyone uses them. Microbicides would allow women, who account for half of new HIV infections worldwide, to protect themselves if their partners will not use condoms. AIDS experts say microbicides, applied before sex, will be most effective when used along with other prevention methods against AIDS. Microbicides could also protect against other sexually transmitted diseases. The trials will enable researchers to see whether the products, which have proven effective in laboratory and animal studies, prevent infection in humans. [View Source](#)

Living Longer by Eating Less Works at Any Age

23 March – The Boston Globe reported it's been known for decades that an animal's lifespan could be extended by severely reducing its calorie intake, while avoiding malnourishment. Calorie restriction slows the rate of aging, as well as the development of age-related diseases. But it was also thought that a restricted diet had to be started early in an animal's life to work well. Now a study on older mice in this week's Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences Early Edition suggests otherwise. Stephen Spindler of the University of California at Riverside and colleagues started late middle-aged mice on a restricted diet and found the same benefits: The mice lived almost six months longer and the onset and progression of cancers were slowed. Genetic analysis revealed that the older calorie-restricted mice had patterns of genetic activity similar to those of mice on the diet from their youth. The researchers suggest that drugs that could mimic the same patterns of genetic activity might give the same beneficial effects. [View Article](#)

New Human Coronavirus Identified

22 March – ProMed reported Dutch scientists have announced they had identified a previously unknown [coronavirus](#) that causes respiratory disease and is likely to have spread around the world. The virus is only the 4th coronavirus to be found in nearly 4 decades and could explain many cases of respiratory illness that leave doctors baffled. Named HCoV-NL63, the virus causes symptoms similar to a bad cold and does not unleash the pneumonia characterized by severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) coronavirus. Young children and people whose immune system has been compromised by HIV or other diseases are more at risk although not apparently fatally so. In a study published online by the journal Nature Medicine the University of Amsterdam team report on their detective work, launched after a 7-month-old girl was admitted to their hospital in April 2003 with bronchiolitis, an inflammation of the lower airways. Tests for common cold viruses, influenza virus, and other well-known respiratory viruses all proved negative. Using RT-PCR screening the Dutch team obtained a couple of fragments that looked like coronavirus genome fragments but not identical to one of the known human coronaviruses. Closer examination of its genetic code showed it shares about 2/3 of its nucleotides with the 3 established coronavirus human coronaviruses. In other words, it was an independent member of the coronavirus family that had never been spotted before. The team

then tested stored samples taken from other admissions and found that another 7 patients with respiratory problems had been infected by the same virus. 4 of the 7 were children less than 12 months old and 3 were adults. 2 of the adults had an impaired immune system -- one had had a bone-marrow transplant and the other had AIDS. [View Report](#)

New Way to Treat Hepatitis B?

18 March - Health Day News reported Swiss researchers have found that an enzyme can block reproduction of the [hepatitis B vaccine](#), a discovery they say could lead to a new treatment for this dangerous liver infection. Their theory is that if the enzyme can block the genetically engineered hepatitis B proteins found in the vaccine, it might also work against the virus itself. Researchers from the University of Geneva report in the March 19 issue of Science that an enzyme designated as APOBEC3G (A3G) has blocked reproduction of the hepatitis B vaccine in laboratory-grown cell lines. The discovery is something of a surprise because A3G until now has been identified only as a molecule that defends against retroviruses that have RNA as their genetic material. The best-known retrovirus is HIV, which causes AIDS and is spread in the same way as hepatitis B, by infected blood and sexual contact. This is the first study to show that A3G can act against a DNA-containing virus such as hepatitis B, according to study author Dr. Didier Trono, chairman of microbiology and molecular medicine at Geneva. [View Article](#)

Painkiller Patch Works as Well as Needle Delivery

16 March – CNN News reported a skin patch that lets the patient deliver a morphine-like drug worked as well as an intravenous pump at relieving pain in people who had undergone major surgery, a manufacturer-funded study found. The results suggest that a self-controlled needle-free method of pain relief might be on the horizon for hospital patients. Alza Corp. is seeking federal approval for its product -- a medicine-filled skin patch the size of a credit card. It is attached to the arm or chest. Patients push a button on the patch to deliver the painkiller. The study of 636 hospitalized adults recovering from major surgery -- including joint replacement, hysterectomy and prostate removal -- appears in Wednesday's Journal of the American Medical Association. Patients were randomly assigned to receive the patch containing fentanyl hydrochloride, or an IV pump containing morphine. Both methods enable patients to administer the painkiller as they need it. After 24 hours of treatment, about 74 percent of patch users and 77 percent of pump users rated their pain-relief methods as good or excellent, a statistical near dead-heat. [View Article](#)

Prepare for Flu Pandemic, Says UN

18 March – BBC News reported the world must prepare itself to face an "inevitable" [influenza](#) pandemic, the World Health Organization has warned. Scientists from the UN's health agency said the world is severely under-prepared, after they compared notes in Geneva. Urgent action should be taken to boost health care, surveillance and the supply of key medicines, they said. "We know another pandemic is inevitable. It is coming," said WHO Director-General Jong Wook Lee. "And when this happens we also know that we are unlikely to have enough drugs, vaccines, health care workers and hospital capacity to cope in an ideal way," he added. Scientists from 40 countries urged governments to create an international stockpile of essential but expensive and complex anti-viral drugs, and to increase the use of the annual influenza vaccine. The fear gaining currency among health experts is that a human form of flu could spread as rapidly as the bird flu that has gripped Asia in recent months. [View Article](#)

Study Examines Physical, Mental Suffering of Child Soldiers

20 March – VOA News reported the United Nations estimates that 300,000 children around the world are serving in rebel and government armies. Most are unwilling participants, abducted from their villages to serve as soldiers, guerrilla fighters, or supporting roles in armed conflicts in more than 50 countries. Belgian researchers have found that if the youngsters survive their ordeal, they are left with severe psychological wounds. Ghent University researcher Ilse Derluyn and colleagues interviewed more than 300 former child soldiers who had been abducted by the northern Ugandan rebel movement, Lord's Resistance Army. Nearly all of the youth, 97 percent, suffered post traumatic stress disorder after an average of two years in servitude. Ms. Derluyn says their problems were typical of this syndrome, persistent nightmares and trouble sleeping and concentrating that lingered long after their ordeal ended. [View Article](#)

Sunscreens May Need to Be Reformulated

23 March – The Washington Times reported the world's sunscreens may need to be reformulated since Australian researchers have determined ultraviolet rays causing sunburn do not cause [skin cancer](#). UVA rays do not burn the skin, but are known to cause wrinkles and skin aging. They had been considered less dangerous than UVB rays, which up to now were blamed for sunburn and causing skin cancer. However, Sydney University researchers say their research finds skin cancer tumors have only UVA mutations, with no UVB mutations discovered. Gary Halliday, a dermatology professor, told the Daily Telegraph the findings indicate sunscreens that provide protection against UVB rays should be reformulated to also offer protection against UVA. [View Article](#)

Survey: More Teens Abusing Inhalants

18 March – CNN News reported inhalant use is on the rise among teenagers, with more than 2 million of them abusing these products at some point in their lives, according to a report. Also known as "huffing" or "sniffing," the abuse involves snorting or inhaling chemical vapors in common household products such as spray paint, glue or cleaning products to get high. About 2.6 million 12- to 17-year-olds have used inhalants in the past, the National Survey on Drug Use and Health estimated, based on a 2002 questionnaire answered by more than 23,000 youths. Two years earlier, the numbers were half a million less. "The use of inhalants is a big concern since these products are legal and can result in irreparable brain damage or death," said Charles Curie of the survey's sponsor, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, at a news briefing in Washington. The sponsor is a Department of Health and Human Services agency. "It's a silent epidemic in many ways, overshadowed and ignored perhaps because it is not considered an 'illegal' drug." [View Article](#)

World Health Day 07 April

19 March - Road Safety is the theme of this year's annual World Health Day celebration, led by the World Health Organization. On April 7, events will be held worldwide to raise awareness about road traffic injuries and public health approaches to prevention. In the United States, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), and other partner organizations are coordinating events to bring attention to the problem of motor vehicle deaths and injuries in the United States and around the world. Each year, road traffic injuries kill more than a million people around the world and injure tens of millions more. [View Site](#)

Focus on Epidemiology

Trends in Tuberculosis --- United States, 1998—2003

19 March – The MMWR reported during 2003, a total of 14,871 [tuberculosis \(TB\)](#) cases (5.1 cases per 100,000 population) were reported in the United States, representing a 1.4% decrease in cases and a 1.9% decline in the rate from 2002. This decline is the smallest since 1992, when TB incidence peaked after 7-year resurgence. In addition, the rate remains higher than the national interim goal of 3.5 cases per 100,000 population that was set for 2000 (1). This report summarizes data from the national TB surveillance system for 2003 and describes trends during a 5-year period, with comparison to 1998 and 2002. Despite a decline in TB nationwide, rates have increased in certain states, and elevated TB rates continue to be reported in certain populations (e.g., foreign-born persons and racial/ethnic minorities). [View Article](#)

DoD-GEIS: SARS Update

24 March - One year ago during the [SARS](#) outbreak CDC and several other laboratories identified the etiologic agent for SARS as a novel coronavirus. Although this disease was ultimately brought under control with public health and infection control measures, it is unclear whether widespread disease will occur again and concern remains regarding animal sources of the virus and human exposure in China. Currently there is no documented community transmission of SARS worldwide and there have been no confirmed DoD cases of SARS. There have been 2 confirmed laboratory-acquired cases of SARS (Singapore and Taiwan) late in 2003 and one probable and 3 confirmed sporadic cases in China since December 2003. No sustained transmission occurred with these cases and investigations continue. There are no travel advisories currently for SARS. By this time last year there were 1,323 suspected and probable cases with 47 deaths and 12 countries affected, according to WHO; ultimately SARS was reported in 27 countries and on all continents. SARS knowledge gained through this outbreak was summarized in a special issue of the journal [Emerging Infectious Diseases](#). DoD SARS surveillance is included in weekly reports from the [DoD Global Influenza Surveillance](#) program and through the DoD-GEIS website listed above. It is clear from the SARS experience that global surveillance and international public health collaboration is crucial to reducing the threat posed by emerging infectious diseases. Information on Influenza (avian and human), Leishmaniasis, West Nile Virus, and severe respiratory syndromes, including SARS, is available on the DoD-GEIS website <http://www.geis.ha.osd.mil>.

USEUCOM

Cameroon: Transmission of Simian Foamy Virus from Primates in the Wild

19 March – ProMed reported [Simian foamy virus](#) (SFV) has been found in human beings in Cameroon. Simian foamy virus is a retrovirus now classified in the genus *Spumavirus* of the family *Retroviridae*. SFV is endemic in the gorillas and monkeys that villagers in Cameroon hunt for bush meat. It is endemic in African apes and monkeys, although so far there is no evidence that it does them -- or human beings -- any harm. But virologists are alarmed by the presence of the virus in human beings, because human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is thought to have crossed over from apes through consumption of bush meat at least 2 decades before it became pandemic. A joint US and Cameroonian team led by Nathan Wolfe found that SFV was infecting people in Cameroon from

at least 3 different hosts: gorillas and 2 monkey species, mandrills and guenons. In a commentary in The Lancet, Martine Peeters, of the Institute of Research for Development in Montpellier, France, said it was not impossible that foamy viruses might cause disease in human beings after a long incubation period. She said the next step was to see if human-to-human transmission was occurring in Africa, whether there were clusters of infection, and whether infection could be linked to any disease. [View Report](#)

Cholera in Mozambique

23 March – WHO reported the Ministry of Health of Mozambique has reported a total of 15,237 cases and 85 deaths between 20 December 2003 and 18 March 2004 in seven provinces (Maputo, Gaza, Sofala, Zambesia, Nampula, Inhambane, Tete). Maputo city is the most affected area with 9 522 cases and 37 deaths. A [cholera](#) emergency was declared by the Ministry of Health on 9 January 2004. WHO and other agencies, including UNICEF, Médecins sans Frontières, World Food Program, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Italian Government are supporting local health authorities in containing the outbreak. [View Report](#)

DRC: Sleeping Sickness Outbreak Reported in Katende, Kasai Occidental

20 March – ProMed reported an outbreak of [sleeping sickness](#) has been reported in Katende health zone, 90 km northeast of Kananga, capital of Kasai Occidental Province in south-central Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). More than a dozen cases of the illness have been reported and the disease had already caused a number of deaths that had not been registered owing to a lack of infrastructure, public understanding of the illness, and health personnel in the region. The resurgence of sleeping sickness is due largely to the destruction of infrastructure during recent years of war in the DRC. [View Report](#)

Farms' Movements Restricted Amid Brucellosis Fears

18 March – Promed reports that movement restrictions have been placed on eight neighboring farms after an outbreak of a "serious" cattle disease. Preliminary tests have shown that six animals from a 38-strong beef suckler herd, near Liskeard, Cornwall, may have [brucellosis](#), which causes abortions in cattle. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs [DEFRA] described the move as "precautionary". Brucellosis is caused by infection with the bacterium *Brucella abortus*, but it can also cause a disease of humans known as undulant fever. [View Source](#)

New Polio Cases Reported in 2 Nigerian States

21 March – ProMed reported new [polio](#) cases have been reported in 2 states in southeast Nigeria, health officials said in press report, as a rights body sued an Islamic group for opposing a polio vaccination campaign in the north of the country. The Vanguard newspaper said the disease has hit Anambra and Imo, 2 states which during February 2004 were free from polio. Anambra and Imo health commissioners said in a joint news conference that the 2 states were ready to support the UN-backed drive to eradicate the disease from Nigeria by the end of 2004. But opposition against the polio drug is still fierce in the northern Nigerian state of Kano, where Islamic clerics and the government have continued to reject the vaccine, saying it is unfit for human consumption. On Wednesday, a Nigerian government-appointed expert panel dismissed claims that the drug contains anti-fertility agents, adding it was safe. Meanwhile, the Civil Rights Congress (CRC) has gone to the high court, seeking an injunction to restrain the Supreme Council of Sharia in Nigeria from opposing the use of the vaccine. The case will be heard on 5 Apr 2004. [View Report](#)

Russia (South Urals): Rise in Diphtheria Cases

20 March – ProMed reported a rise in the incidence of [diphtheria](#) has been observed in Chelyabinsk. 35 people have been reported with the disease since the beginning of 2004. In March 2004, the first fatal case was reported in a child, whose parents did not come in time to seek medical care. According to "Uralinformburo," the chief physician of the state center on epidemiological diseases, Vyacheslav Alexandrov, acknowledged the rise, but commented that it was expected, because the last mass vaccination for diphtheria was in the 1990s, and the vaccine is known to work for 10 years. Since April 2004, mass vaccination from diphtheria will start in the capital of Southern Ural. 12,000 doses of vaccine were bought by the government. First, all children will be vaccinated. However, the above-mentioned amount is far from sufficient. According to physicians' calculations, 170,000 people must be vaccinated. [View Report](#)

Swaziland: World's Highest Rate of HIV Infection

19 March – IRIN News reported a senior UN official confirmed that Swaziland now has the world's highest rate of [HIV](#) infection, at 38.6 percent. "Botswana has made a very strong claim that they have lowered their infection rate from 38.8 percent to 37.5 percent. That leaves Swaziland with the world's highest rate of HIV infection," Stephen Lewis, the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, said at the conclusion of a three-day tour of the country. He expressed satisfaction that the scope of the crisis was now recognized by national leaders and health organizations. "There should be an absolute devotion to HIV/AIDS in every human endeavor in Swaziland over the next few years. It is a battle the world wants you to win," Lewis said. Lewis recalled that on his previous visit, 60 percent to 70 percent of the beds at the central Mbabane government hospital were filled with AIDS patients. "Today, doctors said the figure is 90 percent. People are sleeping under beds. It is a manifestation of the havoc brought by the pandemic," Lewis said. [View Article](#)

USCENTCOM

UN Food Agency to Help Afghan Women Boost Poultry Production

18 March – In a bid to increase food security in Afghanistan, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) announced a new project to help 27,000 women boost poultry production. Women in rural areas will be trained in husbandry techniques designed to improve food security and household incomes over the next three years with the goal increasing egg production by a minimum of 45 million eggs in the first year alone through improved feed and medical care. Poultry production in Afghanistan is almost exclusively a family-based women's activity, and the women will be given improved pullets and a starter kit of supplies for increasing production. After a training period of five months, they will be organized into producers groups for collaboration and supply distribution, through which FAO will provide feed, pullets, poultry vaccination programs, health services and training in marketing skills. [View Article](#)

USNORTHCOM

Benign Rashes Seen in First-time Smallpox Vaccinees

17 March – CIDRAP News reported according to a report in Clinical Infectious Diseases, nine out of 250 people who received their first [smallpox shots](#) in a recent study reacted with a variety of self-limiting skin rashes, a side effect that could be mistaken for a serious reaction to the vaccine. The

rashes appeared on many parts of the body and in some cases caused itching or tingling but were not associated with other major symptoms, say researchers at the Department of Veterans Affairs Hospital and University of Kentucky Medical School in Lexington, Ky. The skin reactions were seen in a study comparing the standard smallpox vaccine, Dryvax, with a new vaccine produced in cell culture. The study included 350 people, 100 of whom had had previous smallpox shots and the rest had not. Dryvax was administered to 100 volunteers, while 250 received the cell-cultured vaccine. Benign rashes were seen in nine (3.6%) of the 250 first-time vaccinees versus none of the previously vaccinated volunteers. Of the nine, seven had received the cell-cultured vaccine and two had received Dryvax. There were no serious complications in any of the volunteers. [View Article](#)

Docs Retool Flu Defenses

18 March – CBS News reported next year's [flu vaccine](#) will contain protection against the strain that caused the most illnesses this winter. A Food and Drug Administration committee, meeting by teleconference, reached a final decision on the components of the next vaccine. The decision made by the FDA committee matches the formula adopted for next year by the World Health Organization. The vaccine includes two strains of A-type flu and one of B-type. Type A flu is generally the harshest, particularly a type known as H3N2. [View Article](#)

Jump in Tuberculosis Cases in New York City

20 March – Newsday.com reports New York City experienced a 5 percent jump in [tuberculosis](#) cases last year, with a large number occurring in immigrants, health officials said Friday. Marking the first rise in new TB cases in the city in more than a decade, the number increased from 1,084 in 2002 to 1,140 in 2003, city health Commissioner Thomas Frieden said at a Manhattan news conference. About 67 percent of the 2003 cases, or 771, occurred in foreign-born New Yorkers, with the largest number in those born in China, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, India and Mexico. Most foreign-born New Yorkers with TB probably contracted it before coming here, Frieden said, urging people who think they might have been exposed to seek free screening and treatment at city tuberculosis chest centers. TB symptoms can include a cough that persists for several weeks, fever, night sweats and weight loss. [View Article](#)

NIOSH Certifies Two Gas Masks for First Responders

18 March – CIDRAP News reported two air-purifying respirators (APRs), or gas masks, have been named as the first such devices to be certified under a federal program to test masks for protecting emergency workers from chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) exposures. The masks are the MSA Millenium APR, made by Mine Safety Appliances Co., Pittsburgh, and the 3M FR-M40, made by 3M Corp., Maplewood, Minn. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) announced the certifications this week. "The certifications signify that the respirators are expected to protect firefighters and other emergency responders from CBRN-related respiratory exposures," NIOSH said in a news release. APRs use special filters to remove particles from ambient air before the user inhales it. They don't provide as much protection as a self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), in which the user breathes air from a tank he or she wears, said NIOSH spokesman Fred Blosser in Washington, DC. SCBAs are usually used in situations where the types and levels of air contaminants are unknown. Once the contaminants are known to be at lower concentrations, APRs can be used, officials said. [View Article](#)

Mexico: Outbreak of Varicella (Chickenpox) in Yucatan State

18 March – ProMed reports an outbreak of [varicella](#) (chickenpox) that so far has affected more than 1000 persons, both children and adults, has placed the health authorities of the state of Yucatan on alert, as they face the risk of acute dissemination of the disease over the coming weeks. Jose Pereira Carcano, Health Secretary, indicated that the number of cases is more than 100 percent higher than that registered during the same period in 2003. In addition, over the past few weeks, health officials have detected [rotavirus infection](#) in some 30 people as well as 8 cases of [dengue fever](#), one of which was of the hemorrhagic type. [View Source](#)

Texas: Canine Rabies

18 March – ProMed reported for the first time since February 2001, there was a laboratory-confirmed case of domestic dog/coyote (DDC) [rabies](#) in Texas. This case, like the case in 2001, was confirmed in a dog in Webb County, which lies along the US-Mexico border. The recent case, which occurred on 10 Mar 2004, was located within Laredo approximately 0.2 mile north of the Rio Grande. The DDC variant tends to travel rapidly through a dog population. Therefore, the City of Laredo has taken proactive steps to control the potential spread of the virus in the incident area, including picking up free-roaming dogs that may have had contact with the rabid dog, determining the vaccination status of domestic animals, trying to locate any exposed persons and animals, and scheduling rabies vaccination clinic. The geographic location of this case is well within the limits of the area covered by the Texas Oral Rabies Vaccination Program (ORVP). The program entails the aerial distribution of edible baits containing oral rabies vaccine with the goal of producing a zone of vaccinated coyotes to control the spread of the epizootic. Program implementation has continued on a yearly basis. Since its initial implementation, the number of DDC cases has declined, including no reported cases in 2002 and 2003, and the northward progression of the epizootic has been halted. [View Report](#)

The RUsick2 Foodborne Disease Forum for Syndromic Surveillance

01 March - The Journal of Emerging Infectious Diseases published an article where the RUsick2 Foodborne Disease Forum at the National Food Safety and Toxicology Center increased reporting of foodborne diseases to more than four times the rate seen in the previous 2 years. Since November 2002, the Forum has allowed pilot-area residents with sudden-onset vomiting or diarrhea to share and compare information regarding what they ate and did before becoming sick. The purpose is to identify a common food source, perhaps resulting in identifying a cluster of persons who ate the same contaminated food item. Such information can assist health departments in detecting foodborne outbreaks while the possibility for intervention remains. [View Article](#)

U.S. Issues Guidelines on Eating of Some Tuna

19 March – The New York Times reported the Food and Drug Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency will recommend that pregnant women, nursing mothers and young children eat no more than six ounces of albacore tuna or about one meal's worth each week, administration officials said. Albacore tuna, often sold as canned white tuna, accounts for more than 5 percent of all seafood consumed in the United States, according to the F.D.A. Recent tests have shown that albacore tuna has higher levels of mercury than other kinds of tuna. Mercury is known to affect neurological development of fetuses and young children. The new guidelines will say that young children and women who are pregnant, nursing or planning to become pregnant can eat up to 12 ounces per week of light tuna, which has less mercury and accounts for about 13 percent of the nation's seafood consumption. [View Article](#)

USPACOM

Cambodia's Malaria Cases Jump 22.5 Percent in 2003

19 March – ProMed reported Cambodia's [malaria](#) cases jumped by 22.5 percent in 2003 to 132,571 cases, due partly to improvements in reporting but also due to a lack of funding, health officials say. The latest figures from the National Centre for Malaria Control showed that better information was being distributed across the country, encouraging people to seek treatment, program coordinator Neang Sophan Dara from the centre said. However, some activities were held up in 2003 due to a lack of funding, which has been improved by the release of USD 900,000 from the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria to be spent by the end of June 2004. [View Report](#)

Five Additional Avian Influenza Outbreaks Confirmed in Cambodia

17 March – Utusan Online reports five more bird flu outbreaks have been confirmed in Cambodia, bringing the number to 10. The Department of Animal Health and Production is maintaining surveillance and will wait at least 40 days before declaring the country free of the pathogen. Officially, declarations that a country is bird flu-free can be made by the World Organization for Animal Health after a 21-day surveillance period with no new outbreaks. Experts in Cambodia fear the disease may be more widespread than has been reported, due to the country's location between Vietnam and Thailand, where a total of 23 people have died from [avian influenza](#). The latest outbreaks bring the total tally to two in the capital, three in central Kandal province, two in northwestern Siem Reap, and three in Takeo. [View Source](#)

Researchers Link Bird Flu Outbreaks in Japan and South Korea

19 March – Go Asia Pacific reported researchers say that the [avian influenza](#) virus detected in Japan and South Korea has common DNA base sequences, raising speculation that the disease may have been carried by migrating birds. The Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries says that scientists have found the DNA sequences of infected birds in Yamaguchi, Oita and Kyoto prefectures match by 99 per cent those from a sample obtained in South Korea earlier this month. Four infected Japanese sites are all located in western and south-western districts that are relatively close to the Korean peninsula. [View Article](#)

Vietnam Concerned over Spike in Dengue Fever Cases

24 March – ProMed reported health authorities in Vietnam expressed concern over the growing numbers of people infected with [dengue fever](#), the mosquito-borne disease that has killed 7 people this year [2004] in the country. Pham Ngoc Dinh, deputy director of the Hanoi-based Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology, said 4,199 people had been infected since the beginning of 2004, a 90 percent increase compared to the same period of 2003. The worst-affected areas were in the southern Mekong Delta region, where moist and humid conditions provide ideal breeding conditions for mosquitoes. The region accounted for over 90 percent of the cases and all the deaths. [View Report](#)

Visceral Leishmaniasis Kills Nine People in India

18 March – Karalanext.com reports that in the previous week, nine people have died in a Bihar village of visceral [leishmaniasis](#) (kala azar) a parasitic disease caused by the sand fly. About 12 more are suffering from the disease at Ghogghi village in the Lakhisarai district. All those affected are from the

poor 'Mushar', or rat eater, caste. According to health officials the fatalities occurred because there were no doctors or medicines available to fight the disease. Nearly 90 percent of visceral leishmaniasis cases reported in India during 1987-2002 are from Bihar. The mortality rate is about 10 percent. According to experts, 0.5 million to 2.5 million new cases of visceral leishmaniasis are estimated to occur annually in the world. There has been a sharp increase in the number of recorded cases of the disease since 1993. The disease has taken an endemic form in 88 countries with 350 million people at risk. [View Source](#)

USSOUTHCOM

Argentina: Outbreak of Hepatitis A in Buenos Aires

21 March – ProMed reported the government of Buenos Aires reported that more than 160 cases of [hepatitis A](#), one of them [in the locality of Berzategui] fatal, have been registered in Berzategui, Quilmes, and Florencio Varela, and that an emergency sanitary program has been implemented. Vaccination is being administered in the areas with higher concentration of cases, because authorities believe that there is more than one focus of disease. [View Report](#)

Dengue Fever in El Salvador

24 March – ProMed reported last week El Salvador's Ministry of Health had laboratory confirmation of 37 [dengue fever](#) cases. This represents a considerable increase compared with the 2 previous years. For 2004, 455 cases of dengue have been reported. In 2003 for the same epidemiological week there were only 269 cases. There are now more cases than in 2002, a year which was considered as epidemic for DF in El Salvador. Although there is a year-by-year increase, the first weeks of 2004 show a trend towards decreasing numbers. Previously, there were between 46 and 66 confirmed cases per week. However, the Minister of Health, Herbet Betancourt, says that people should not trust this trend, because larval indexes are high. For this week, there are 4 departments declared to be in alert status: San Salvador, La Libertad, La Paz, and San Vicente (these departments still have high hospitalization rates). San Salvador has already had more than 200 confirmed cases in 2004. Fortunately, DHF case numbers are still low. This year only 19 cases (DHF) have been reported, compared with 24 in [2003]. [View Report](#)

Dengue Fever in Venezuela

24 March – ProMed reported in the first 9 weeks of 2004 there were 8,848 cases of [dengue fever](#), with a peak of 1,211 cases in the 3rd epidemiological week [18-25 Jan 2004]. Regarding DHF, there are a total of 634 cases reported in these 9 weeks (7.17 percent of total). During those 9 weeks 3 deaths were reported. There are 10 states [out of the 24 states in Venezuela] with incidence rates higher than the countrywide rate: Falcon, Nueva Esparta, Merida, Trujillo, Tachira, Monagas, Vargas, Capital District, Lara, and Barinas. Falcon state reported the highest rate with 274.3 cases per 100,000 pop, followed by Nueva Esparta (Margarita Island) with 120.3. The Capital District rate is 43.4. [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/Hioupdate/>.

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