

USACHPPM
HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE

3 June 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

Air Pollution Causes Heart Disease

1 June – Reuters reported that air pollution causes [heart disease](#), according to the American Heart Association. While pollution does not cause as many heart attacks as high blood pressure, for example, it is a serious risk factor, the group said in a statement. "This is a serious public health problem due to the enormous number of people affected and because exposure to air pollution occurs over an entire lifetime," said Dr. Robert Brook of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Brook and colleagues said this was the first firm conclusion from the group about the long-term effects of chronic exposure to pollution. They reviewed as many published studies as they could find on links between heart disease and pollution. Particulate matter pollution -- soot -- is especially dangerous, they concluded. They also reaffirmed that secondhand smoke increased the risk for cardiovascular mortality. Traffic is one of the worst sources, they found. An eight-year study of 5,000 adults showed people who lived near a major road were more likely to die of a cardiovascular problem. More study was needed to understand how, exactly, pollution caused heart disease, the researchers said. [View Article](#)

Cancer Deaths Down in U.S., Report Finds

3 June – Reuters reported that more Americans are surviving [cancer](#) for five years or more and cancer rates overall are steadily declining. This is due to better prevention, screening that catches cancer early enough to treat it and better therapies. For the first time, fewer women are being diagnosed with lung cancer, the joint report from the American Cancer Society, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Cancer Institute, and the North American Association of Central Cancer Registries finds. Cancer remains the second leading cause of death in the United States behind heart disease. This year 1.368 million Americans will learn they have cancer and 563,700 will die of it. Ten percent gains in cancer survival rates were seen for men in cancers of the prostate, colon and kidney, and non-Hodgkin lymphoma, melanoma, and leukemia. Women made 10 percent survival gains in colon, kidney, and breast cancers and non-Hodgkin lymphoma. But the report found that patients with the most deadly forms such as lung, pancreatic or liver cancers were only a little more likely to survive. And almost every racial and ethnic minority was more likely than whites to die of cancer. [View Article](#) [View Press Release](#)

Driving Boosts Obesity, Study Finds

31 May – The Associated Press reported that spending more time behind the wheel -- and less time on two feet -- is contributing to the nation's [obesity](#) epidemic, a new study concludes. The survey of 10,500 Atlanta residents found that for every extra 30 minutes commuters drove each day, they had a 3 percent greater chance of being obese than their peers who drove less. The survey also found that people who lived within walking distance of shops -- less than a half mile -- were 7 percent less likely to be obese than their counterparts who had to drive. That much seems obvious, but researchers were surprised to discover that how much time a person spent driving had a greater impact on whether a person was obese than other factors such as income, education, gender or ethnicity. About 91 percent of the people surveyed said they didn't walk to destinations. Many spent more than an hour each day in their cars. Suburban white men typically weighed about 10 pounds more than men who lived in dense urban areas. [View Article](#)

Filtered Blood Shortens Hospital Stay

29 May – The British Medical Journal published a study that showed transfusing leukocyte depleted blood may reduce hospital stay and risk of multiorgan failure in patients undergoing major surgery. Van Hilten and colleagues randomized 1051 patients to filtered blood or to standard care after abdominal surgery. Infection rates and duration of stay in intensive care did not differ, and the only patients in the intervention group with better survival were those who had gastrointestinal surgery. However, time spent in hospital was 2.4 days shorter and multiorgan failure was 30% less likely in the intervention group. [View Article](#)

Health Experts: Little Risk of Infection from Dead Killed in Natural Disasters

1 June – VOA News reported that public health experts say there is little risk of widespread infection from the bodies of the dead killed in a natural disaster. International health agencies are seeking to end practices like mass burials that prevent families from interring the dead with their own traditions. The World Health Organization (WHO) says the dead are no more dangerous than the living after a natural disaster. Oliver Morgan, of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Diseases, conducted a thorough search of previous articles relating to natural disasters, the possibility of danger to survivors and those who handle bodies, and the proper disposal of corpses. "There are many myths following disasters that the bodies of the victims can spread disease among the surviving population," he said. "The victims of the natural disasters usually die from trauma. Like the general public, they are no more likely to have diseases that can cause epidemics. Also, once a person has died, that dead body is unable to sustain the infectious diseases for very long. Also, the process of decomposition itself does not pose a risk of transmitting infectious diseases." Mr. Morgan added that unjustified worries about the infectiousness of corpses can lead to their rapid, unplanned disposal, often before proper identification of the dead is made and relatives notified. [View Source](#)

Large Study on Mental Illness Finds Global Prevalence

2 June – The New York Times reported that preliminary results from the world's largest survey on mental health indicate that [mental illness](#) is widespread and undertreated, and that wealthy people with mild illness receive more and better treatment than poor people with severe illness. From 1 to 5 percent of the populations of most of the countries surveyed had serious mental illness and in most of the countries, 9 to 17 percent of those interviewed had had some episode of mental illness in the last year, whether serious or less severe. In poor countries, about 80 percent of serious cases went untreated, but even in richer countries 35 to 50 percent of cases had not been treated in the last year. The findings were based on 60,643 face-to-face interviews with adults in 14 countries. The interviews

assessed a wide range of ills, including agoraphobia, obsessive-compulsive and panic disorders, post-traumatic stress syndrome, bipolar disorders, bulimia, major depression, and alcohol and drug abuse. [View Article](#) (registration required)

Nanoparticles Illuminate Brain Tumors for Days under MRI

31 May – Science Daily reported a research team from Oregon Health & Science University and the Portland Veterans Affairs Medical Center is demonstrating some of the world's first clinical applications for nanometer-size particles in the brain. The scientists have shown that an iron oxide nanoparticle as small as a virus can outline not only [brain tumors](#) under magnetic resonance imaging, but also other lesions in the brain that may otherwise have gone unnoticed. So named because of its billionth-of-a-meter proportions, the iron oxide nanoparticle, ferumoxtran-10, can be viewed as a contrast agent under MR for more than 24 hours, sometimes as long as five days. In a parallel study, ferumoxtran-10 also was found to provide a stable imaging marker during surgery to remove brain tumors, and it remains in the brain long enough for post-operative MR, even after surgical manipulation. The studies' findings have the potential to assist image-guided brain surgery and improve diagnosis of lesions caused by multiple sclerosis, stroke and other neurological disorders, in addition to residual tumors. [View Article](#)

New Drug Approved for Travelers' Diarrhea

27 May – Health Day News reported that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has approved a drug to treat a common menace that ruins up to 40 percent of overseas vacations -- [travelers' diarrhea](#). Salix Pharmaceuticals' Xifaxan (rifaximin) was developed by Dr. Herbert DuPont, director of the Center for Infectious Diseases at the University of Texas School of Public Health. DuPont said the drug is unique in that it remains in the gastrointestinal tract, compared with powerful antibiotics like Cipro that disperse throughout the body. This means the drug is less likely to breed resistant bacteria. He said his antibiotic proved 85 percent effective in protecting U.S. students who participated in a two-week study trip to Mexico. [View Source](#)

Smoking Harms Nearly Every Major Organ of the Body

28 May – "The Health Consequences of Smoking: A Report of the Surgeon General, 2004" has four major conclusions: First, it affirms that [smoking](#) harms nearly every major organ of the body, often in profound ways, causing many diseases and significantly diminishing the health of smokers in general. Second, quitting smoking has immediate as well as long-term benefits. Within minutes and hours after smokers inhale that last cigarette, their bodies begin a series of changes that continue for years. Third, smoking so-called low-tar and low-nicotine cigarettes provides no clear benefit to health. Finally, the list of diseases caused by smoking has been expanded to include abdominal aortic aneurysm; acute myeloid leukemia; cataract; periodontitis; pneumonia; and cancers of the cervix, kidney, pancreas, and stomach. [View Entire Report](#)

Soy May Stave Off Endometrial Cancer

27 May – Health Day News reported that eating soy regularly reduced the risk of [endometrial cancer](#) by 30 percent to 40 percent among the women studied in Shanghai. The protective effect of soy was particularly significant among obese women, who are at high risk for endometrial cancer. Researchers collected data on 832 Chinese women in Shanghai diagnosed with endometrial cancer between 1997 and 2001 and compared them with 846 healthy Chinese women. Endometrial cancer is an increasing problem in the US, primarily because of the epidemic of obesity -- obese women have higher levels of natural estrogen, which can increase the risk of endometrial cancer. [View Source](#)

Study Says Condoms Contain Cancer-Causing Substance

28 May – Reuters reported that most condoms contain a cancer-causing chemical and their manufacture should be subject to greater quality control. The Chemical and Veterinary Investigation Institute in Stuttgart, Germany, said it found the carcinogen N-Nitrosamine present in 29 of 32 types of condoms it tested in simulated conditions. "[N-Nitrosamine](#) is one of the most carcinogenic substances," the study's authors said. "There is a pressing need for manufacturers to tackle this problem." The carcinogen is thought to be present in a substance used to improve condom elasticity. When the rubber material comes in contact with human bodily fluids, it can release traces of N-Nitrosamine, the study said. Local government officials said condom users should not stop using rubber contraceptives based on results of the study because N-Nitrosamine does not present an immediate health danger. But Germany's Federal Institute for Risk Assessment said that daily condom use exposed users to N-Nitrosamine levels up to three times higher than levels naturally present in food. [View Source](#)

Women Smokers Not More Likely to Get Cancer -Study

2 June – Reuters reported that contrary to common belief, women smokers are not more likely than men to get [lung cancer](#), U.S. researchers reported on Tuesday. They found that lung cancer is an equal opportunity killer, taking just as many male smokers as female. The American Cancer Society estimates tobacco will cause 87 percent of the expected 160,440 U.S. lung cancer deaths in 2004. Despite this figure and even though smoking is also the biggest cause of heart disease, about 23 percent of Americans smoke. More men smoke than women and are therefore more likely to die of lung cancer. But as more women began to smoke, lung cancer rates began to rise sharply for females starting in the mid-1960s. The Cancer Society team and researchers at Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital studied statistics covering 85,000 men and women for their report. [View Source](#)

Yo-Yo Dieting May Have a Long-Term Negative Effect on Immune Function

1 June – EurekAlert reported that yo-yo dieting, in which a person repeatedly loses and regains weight, may have a lasting negative impact on immune function. Conversely, maintaining the same weight over time appears to have a positive effect on the immune system. Researchers found that long-term immune function decreases in proportion to how many times a woman reportedly intentionally loses weight. They also found that immune function – as measured by natural-killer-cell activity – was higher among women who had been fairly weight stable over several years. [View Source](#)

Focus on Epidemiology

Chronic Wasting Disease and Potential Transmission to Humans

June 2004 – Emerging Infectious Diseases reported that [Chronic wasting disease](#) (CWD) of deer and elk is endemic in a tri-corner area of Colorado, Wyoming, and Nebraska, and new foci of CWD have been detected in other parts of the United States. Although detection in some areas may be related to increased surveillance, introduction of CWD due to translocation or natural migration of animals may account for some new foci of infection. Increasing spread of CWD has raised concerns about the potential for increasing human exposure to the CWD agent. The foodborne transmission of bovine spongiform encephalopathy to humans indicates that the species barrier may not completely protect

humans from animal prion diseases. Conversion of human prion protein by CWD-associated prions has been demonstrated in an in vitro cell-free experiment, but limited investigations have not identified strong evidence for CWD transmission to humans. More epidemiologic and laboratory studies are needed to monitor the possibility of such transmissions. [View Entire Article](#)

Detection of SARS-associated Coronavirus in Throat Wash and Saliva

1 June – The Journal of Emerging Infectious Diseases reported the severe acute respiratory syndrome–associated coronavirus (SARS-CoV) is thought to be transmitted primarily through dispersal of droplets, but little is known about the load of SARS-CoV in oral droplets. Researchers examined oral specimens, including throat wash and saliva, and found large amounts of SARS-CoV RNA in both throat wash and saliva from all specimens of 17 consecutive probable [SARS](#) case-patients, supporting the possibility of transmission through oral droplets. Immunofluorescence study showed replication of SARS-CoV in the cells derived from throat wash, demonstrating the possibility of developing a convenient antigen detection assay. This finding, with the high detection rate a median of four days after disease onset and before the development of lung lesions in four cases, suggests that throat wash and saliva should be included in sample collection guidelines for SARS diagnosis. [View Article](#)

Other timely information can be found in:

The latest issue of the [DoD Global Emerging Infections Surveillance and Response System](#)

The current issue of the Army Medical Surveillance Activity's [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

This week's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

USCENTCOM

Ebola Hemorrhagic Fever in South Sudan - Update 3

1 June – The World Health Organization reported that as of 31 May 2004, the health authorities of Yambio County have reported a total of 25 cases, including six deaths from [Ebola hemorrhagic fever](#) (EHF) in Yambio, Western Equatoria, south Sudan. Enhanced surveillance, follow-up of contacts and case management are continuing. As part of the [Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network \(GOARN\)](#), additional staff are assisting the team with social mobilization activities in the surrounding area. [View Article](#)

Kidnappers Target and Torture Iraq's Best Doctors

1 June – The Seattle Times reported for two months, someone has been kidnapping the best doctors in Iraq. Health officials and doctors estimate that as many as 100 surgeons, specialists and general physicians have been abducted from their homes and clinics since the beginning of April. Some were beaten and tortured. Most were released after the payment of between \$20,000 and \$200,000 in ransom. Already plagued by outdated equipment and drug shortages, Iraq's fragile health-care system is buckling under this new security threat. Some doctors who have not been kidnapped have fled Iraq — just as the nation most needs their help. Ransom, it seems, is not the only motivation for the crimes. In many cases, abductors have ordered the physicians to leave Iraq, sometimes setting a deadline. Iraqi officials fear that the abductions and threats are an organized attempt to cripple the

country's healthcare network, likening the tactics to terrorist attacks on the country's oil pipelines or electricity plants. [View Article](#)

USEUCOM

Cholera in Niger

2 June – The World Health Organization reported that The Ministry of Health, Niger has reported a total of 137 cases including five deaths of [cholera](#) between 3 May 2004 and 17 May 2004 in the region of Tillabery (Ayorou city). *Vibrio cholerae O1 El Tor Ogawa* has been laboratory confirmed. This outbreak is linked to heavy rainfalls in the area, and to population movements along the Niger River for trade purposes, between Gao and Timbuctu Provinces in Mali and Tillabery district in Niger. The Ministry of Health, with the support of WHO is implementing control measures in the area, including the restriction of market places and health education activities around safe drinking water. [View Article](#)

Norway Bans Smoking in Bars

1 June – Reuters reported Norway followed Ireland to become the second nation to outlaw [smoking](#) in all bars and restaurants with Oslo hoping the crackdowns will spur copycat bans around the globe. Lighting up inside any bar, cafe, club or restaurant is illegal. Sweden and New Zealand have passed similar laws and that Britain was discussing restrictions. The law aims to protect waiters and other pub and restaurant staff from second-hand smoke blamed for causing cancer and heart and respiratory diseases. Smoking is already outlawed in workplaces from offices to railway stations. U.S. states including Maine, Florida and California have similar bans, as do cities including New York and Boston. [View Article](#)

Prevalent Mental Health Problems Three Years after NATO Bombing of Serbia

31 May – EurekAlert reported that [depression](#) and [post-traumatic stress disorder](#) "remain a significant public health concern" three years after the 1999 NATO campaign in Serbia. Almost half of the 562 people questioned had symptoms of depression and more than one in eight had symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Researchers assessed the mental state of patients visiting the emergency department. Older patients, those with lower levels of social support, and those that were unemployed were more likely to have symptoms of depression. People who had been a refugee longer than 30 days and those living in remote Laplje Selo were more likely to be suffering from symptoms of PTSD. A large proportion of participants in this study had features of both mental health disorders. The prevalence of mental health disorders may be overestimated in this study, as the sample is made up of patients in emergency departments. However, the study does show that physicians in emergency departments are frequently missing opportunities to diagnose mental health conditions. [View Source](#)

Russia (Bashkiriya): Epidemic of Hemorrhagic Fever Threatens City of Ufa

28 May – ProMED reported that a [hemorrhagic fever](#) outbreak is thought to be imminent in the capital of Bashkiriya. Medical specialists in Ufa made this prediction, since there are already 44 cases of infection with this dangerous virus, four times greater than in 2003. The inhabitants of Bashkiriya have a greater risk of contracting hemorrhagic fever than those in other regions of Russia. Field voles are

particularly abundant in the lime tree forests of Bashkiriya. The climate this year is also favorable for these rodents: warm winter, dry spring and autumn with little flooding are ideal conditions for multiplication of these rodents. Health professionals are warning people be especially careful in the countryside: store food products in places inaccessible for rodents, do not lie in grass, and wash your hands often. [View Source](#)

Tick-Borne Encephalitis - Russia (Krasnoyarsk)

31 May – ProMED reported that the last 10 days of May saw a peak in tick activity. An average of 60 ticks per kilometer has been recorded along trails in the Stolbi nature reserve in the Krasnoyarsk region. The number of people seeking medical attention for tick bites has risen to 2411. 43 people have been hospitalized with a preliminary diagnosis of [tick-borne encephalitis](#) virus infection. So far 26 people registered in the Krasnoyarsk region have a confirmed diagnosis of tick-borne encephalitis virus infection. [View Source](#)

Tick-Borne Encephalitis - Russia (Udmurtia)

28 May – ProMED reported that at least 240 people have contracted [tick-borne encephalitis](#) since the beginning of the tick season as a result of tick bites in Udmurtia. According to the State Sanitary Epidemiological Surveillance Centre, 2600 people including 758 children have suffered tick bites. Health officials are warning people to take care in forested areas. Udmurtia is an ideal environment for ticks due to its favorable climate. That is why the incidence of tick-borne encephalitis is on average six times higher than in the rest of Russia. [View Source](#)

West Nile Virus Contingency Plans - UK

1 June – ProMED reported that [West Nile virus](#), which recently killed almost 300 people in America, could soon appear in Britain because of climate change and the growth of international travel. Sir Liam Donaldson, the Chief Medical Officer, said that while the threat was low, the chances of an outbreak of the mosquito-borne disease in Britain were increasing. About 1/5 of people infected by the virus develop West Nile fever; symptoms include headaches, rashes and swollen lymph glands. More serious infection can lead to West Nile encephalitis or meningitis. Contingency plans have been drawn up after evidence that the Asian tiger mosquito (*Aedes albopictus*), which transmits the disease to human beings from animals such as horses and birds, is now in Britain. [View Source](#)

Yellow Fever in Burkina Faso – Update

1 June – The World Health Organization reported that as of 1 June 2004, the Ministry of Health, Burkina Faso has reported no new cases of [yellow fever](#) in Bobo-Dioulasso district. However, there is a high risk of a major urban outbreak of yellow fever in Bobo-Dioulasso in the immediate future. The rainy season is just beginning and the vector for yellow fever in an urban setting, *Aedes aegypti*, is already present in the district. Bobo-Dioulasso, with a population of 740,192, is densely populated and vaccination coverage against yellow fever is low. The district is also a busy crossroads for population movements across West Africa. For these reasons, WHO strongly recommends a mass vaccination campaign in Bobo-Dioulasso as soon as possible. [View Article](#)

USNORTHCOM

African-Americans Respond Poorly To Hepatitis C Treatment

26 May – EurekAlert reported that African-Americans have a significantly lower response rate to treatment for chronic [hepatitis C](#) than non-Hispanic whites. Some African-Americans – 19 percent – did respond to the drug combination of peginterferon alfa-2b and ribavirin. But in non-Hispanic whites with the same disease, the hepatitis C genotype 1 virus strain, 52 percent had no evidence of the virus in their blood six months after completing the drug therapy – one of the highest response rates ever reported for this therapy. The study showed the difference in infection rates between the two groups is not responsible for the low response rate to treatment in African-Americans. An estimated 4 million people in the United States are infected with hepatitis C. [View Article](#)

Feds Begin Expanded Testing For Mad Cow Disease

2 June – KIROTV.com reported that the federal Agriculture Department has begun expanded national testing for [mad-cow disease](#), intending to test about 220,000 animals for the brain-wasting condition over the next year to 18 months. The first case of mad-cow disease in the United States was confirmed last December in a cow from a dairy farm in Mabton, Washington. The government last year conducted mad cow tests on tissues from more than 20,000 animals, virtually all of them cattle that could not stand or walk and had to be dragged to slaughter. With many foreign governments still reluctant to ease bans on U.S. beef, the testing program was expanded to include as many as 220,000 slaughtered animals. About 35 million head of cattle are slaughtered each year in the United States. [View Source](#)

HHS Allocates \$498 Million for Hospital Preparedness

27 May - CIDRAP News reported that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is allocating \$498 million for grants to states to help healthcare facilities improve their ability to cope with bioterrorist attacks, other disease outbreaks, and natural disasters that could cause many casualties. With this year's awards, HHS will have provided more than \$1.5 billion for hospital preparedness over the past three years. The grants go to states, territories, and four metropolitan areas: New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Washington, DC. The grants to states range from \$1.75 million for Wyoming to \$38.8 million for California. The agency awards a base grant of \$1 million to each state or city, and the additional amount is based on population. [View Article](#) [View News Release](#)

New Mexico, Arizona Have Year's First West Nile Cases

1 June - CIDRAP News reported that the nation's first human cases of [West Nile virus](#) (WNV) infection were reported last week in New Mexico and Arizona, marking the first time the West Nile season has begun so far west. The New Mexico Department of Health announced last week that a man in San Juan County had tested positive for the virus and had recovered after having only mild symptoms. In Arizona, Maricopa County health officials in Phoenix said last week that a local man became ill with what turned out to be WNV infection. He subsequently recovered. The debut of West Nile this year was slightly later than in the past two years. WNV has moved steadily westward since it first emerged in the New York City area in August 1999. Last year was the first year the virus was found west of the Continental Divide. The only states that have yet to see their first known human cases of the infection are Washington, Oregon, Alaska, and Hawaii, Grant said. The nation had a total of 9,862 human cases in 2003, with 264 deaths, according to the CDC. [View Article](#)

NIAID Seeks Vaccines for H5N1 Avian Flu

28 May - CIDRAP News reported that the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) has awarded contracts to two companies to develop vaccines based on the H5N1 [avian influenza virus](#) in an effort to limit the risk of a human influenza pandemic. Contracts were awarded to Aventis Pasteur Inc. and Chiron Corp. both of which make inactivated flu virus vaccines that are used each flu season. Each company will produce 8,000 to 10,000 doses of vaccine, which the NIAID will then test in clinical trials, the agency said. Each contract will be worth about \$2 million and will cover about a 2-year period, according to an NIAID spokeswoman. The NIAID said, "If a pandemic of H5N1 avian influenza were to occur in humans, production of such a vaccine on a commercial scale could be used to protect laboratory workers, public health personnel at risk and, if needed, the general public." [View Source](#)

Milwaukee Trying to Control Whooping Cough Outbreak

28 May – Health Day News reported that health officials in Milwaukee have told people with suspected symptoms of [whooping cough](#) to seek treatment and stay at home until they're no longer contagious. The request is an attempt to control a whooping cough outbreak. There have been 27 cases reported in Milwaukee. There were only 15 cases of whooping cough (pertussis) in the city last year. Many adults with whooping cough experience mild symptoms and may not even know they have it. Whooping cough is spread when an infected person talks, coughs or sneezes. Initial symptoms resemble those of the common cold. But people with whooping cough develop uncontrollable coughing fits. [View Article](#)

More Seek Alternative Medicine

27 May – CBS News reported [alternative medicine](#) - including yoga, meditation, herbs and the Atkins diet - appears to be growing in popularity in the United States, perhaps because of dissatisfaction with conventional care, the government said. More than a third of American adults used such practices in 2002, according to the government survey of 31,000 people, the largest study on non-conventional medical approaches in the United States. If prayer is included, about 62 percent of U.S. adults used some form of alternative medicine. The results seem to indicate more people are turning to alternative medicine, though the 2002 survey could not be directly compared to previous studies because of differences in size and survey methods, health officials said. The top alternative therapies included prayer (43% of adults), natural products (19%), meditation (8%) and diets such as Atkins, Ornish, or the Zone (4%). [View Article](#)

Northeasterners Warned on Eating Certain Farmed Fish

28 May – Health Day News reported that salmon and trout raised on federally sponsored farms in the northeastern United States are so contaminated with dioxin and other pollutants that area residents should watch how much of the fish they eat. Despite other federal announcements this week touting the normal heart-healthy benefits of eating fish, federal officials have concluded that anglers who catch trout and salmon raised on federal farms but are later released into public waterways should eat no more than half a serving of these fish a month. About 14,000 of these fish are released every year. Most of the pollutants found in the prized catches are believed to come from [PCBs](#) found in the fish oil and meal fed to the farm-raised fish. The federal Wildlife Service is recommending that state fish and wildlife directors discuss the test results with public health officials before deciding whether to continue releasing the federally donated fish into their waters, the wire service said. [View Article](#)

Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever - Nebraska

1 June - ProMED reported that two cases of [Rocky Mountain spotted fever](#) (RMSF) have been identified in Jefferson County, the first cases this year. Both of the individuals are under 19 years of age. RMSF is spread by the bite of an infected tick. In Nebraska, the American dog tick is the most common carrier. The people most at risk are those who have exposure to tick-infested habitats, such as wooded and grassy areas. Symptoms usually appear within two weeks of the bite of an infected tick. They include the sudden onset of a moderate to high fever (which can last for 2 or 3 weeks without treatment), severe headache, fatigue, deep muscle pain, chills and rash. Antimicrobials can treat the disease. [View Article](#)

USPACOM

Beijing Gets SARS All-Clear

2 June – News24.com reported that the Chinese capital has closed down its Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome ([SARS](#)) prevention headquarters and ended emergency control measures as of June 1. In a similar move, the Ministry of Public Health announced the suspension of daily surveillance reports on the epidemic, saying the latest outbreak had been effectively put under control. The decision was made following the discharge of all seven SARS patients on recovery in the city and the removal from isolation of those having close contact with them. So far nine people, all linked to a Beijing virology institute, have been confirmed as having SARS this year, including one who later died. [View Source](#)

Exotic Mosquito Interception at Auckland Port

30 May – ProMED reported that exotic mosquitoes have been found in a used imported concrete mixer at the Port of Auckland, New Zealand, by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Quarantine staff during a routine inspection. The species was identified as *Aedes albopictus*, also known as the Asian Tiger mosquito. This species is of particular concern because not only might it carry the [Ross River Virus](#), it is an excellent vector of [dengue fever](#) and [yellow fever](#). The larvae were found on a ship from Yokohama, Japan. The container where the larvae were found was immediately treated with BTI (*Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis*), while the concrete truck and risk goods were fumigated before release. [View Source](#)

Japanese Calf 'Immune to Mad Cow Disease'

31 May – VOA News reported Japan's Kirin Brewery Company claims its scientists have produced a calf that will be born immune to [mad-cow disease](#), as a result of genetic manipulation. A statement in Tokyo by Kirin, which has a large pharmaceutical division, says the calf "carries none of the prion proteins that cause the brain-wasting [mad cow] disease", also known as bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). Kirin says the calf is still in its mother's womb and is due to be born early next year. BSE has been linked to prions, or infectious proteins, but the Japanese firm offered no further details to explain how the animal would be immune from the brain-wasting disease. [View Article](#)

Rural India's Vaishali District Affected by Visceral Leishmaniasis (Kala-azar)

26 May – ProMED reported the entire rural area of the Vaishali district has been affected by [visceral leishmaniasis](#) (kala-azar disease) during the past two months. According to official figures, three people have died of kala-azar, while 298 are still affected in different areas. As many as 157 patients with kala-azar were provided medical treatment, while 138 patients are still undergoing treatment at different primary health centers in the district. The Mahua, Raghapur, Mahnar, Lalganj, Goraul, Sahdeibujurag, Vaishali, Bidupur and Jandaha blocks are the most severely affected. Since 1989, the Vaishali district has been affected by kala-azar, but no concrete measures have been undertaken to eliminate the sand-fly, which is the carrier of the disease. [View Article](#)

Sri Lanka Battles Mosquitoes as Dengue Fever Claims 18 Lives

31 May – Yahoo! News reported Sri Lankan authorities launched a week-long campaign to destroy breeding grounds of mosquitoes as [dengue fever](#) claimed 18 lives while another 3,300 people were infected. The health ministry's epidemiology unit said there was a potential threat of a dengue epidemic ahead of the monsoon season that starts in June and continues for two months. "We have seen a sharp increase in the number of cases reported in May and we fear the numbers will increase in the next two months with the monsoon setting in," said Doctor Hasitha Tissera of the epidemiology unit. The district of Colombo had 667 cases of dengue this year, making it the worst-hit region in the country, he said, as municipal workers and volunteers began a campaign here to clean up the city of mosquito breeding grounds. [View Article](#)

Thailand Renews Efforts to Curb Malaria along Border

28 May – The Bangkok Post reported health authorities in Thailand have renewed a drive to curb [malaria](#) along the border following a sharp increase in the number of infections in the region. Malaria posts will be upgraded and local health volunteers will be trained to diagnose and treat the disease in its initial stage. Malaria posts were first set up four years ago in remote communities but had not been effective. The number of malaria patients in the first five months of this fiscal year was greater than all of last year. There were 11,447 cases compared with 10,278 reported in the 2003 fiscal year. About one-third of patients were Thais and the rest Burmese immigrants. [View Article](#)

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Active Search for Visceral Leishmaniasis in Luque

30 May – ProMED reported that the National Malaria Eradication Service (Senepa) is actively searching for cases of [visceral leishmaniasis](#) in the locality of Luque, where the fourth victim of the disease was reported. The patient is a 14-month-old girl who died at the Tropical Medicine Institute. The disease commonly affects malnourished children; and that one of the first symptoms is fever that is present for more than 15 days. So far, 3 infants have died of visceral leishmaniasis, and one adult from Itapua, as a result of the cutaneous form of the disease. Representatives from Senepa are searching for other cases of the disease and setting traps for the vector. Once its presence in the area is confirmed, the fumigation process will begin. In addition, the public has been informed that infected dogs must be sacrificed. [View Report](#)

Hantavirus Confirmed as Cause of Death - Brazil

1 June – ProMED reported that after 9 days of investigations, a virology exam performed at the Adolfo Lutz Institute in Sao Paulo detected a [hantavirus](#) that was responsible for the deaths of two 17-year-olds and a 24-year-old last week in Sao Sebastiao, after they were hospitalized with generalized body aches, nausea and vomiting. The disease is transmitted through inhalation of dust containing feces and urine of wild mice. Those who live in rural zones are usually more vulnerable to the disease. The symptoms begin between 3 and 15 days following the infection, with respiratory or renal manifestations. The objective now is to identify the areas at risk. In addition to the deaths, two persons are still hospitalized under observation, suspected of having hantavirus infection. [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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