

USACHPPM
HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE

21 March 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 ISSUES

Another Reason Not to Skip Breakfast

11 March – ABC News reported sugar-laden cereals and high-fat muffins in the morning may not be ideal fare, but eating anything for breakfast seems healthier than skipping the first meal of the day, researchers report. Those who say they regularly eat breakfast are less likely to develop problems such as diabetes or become obese than people who report typically rushing out the door on an empty stomach, the new study shows. Breakfast eaters are up to 55 percent less likely to have problems with insulin resistance or become obese than their non-breakfasting counterparts. Although the best results came from eating whole-grain cereals and other nutritious breakfast items, "eating breakfast at all was preferential to not eating," says Linda Van Horn, a professor of preventive medicine at Northwestern University and one of the authors of the study. [View Article](#)

Caring for Victims of Nuclear and Radiological Terrorism

February (Volume 28, Number 2) – *The Nurse Practitioner* journal published an article with specific steps for clinicians to take in caring for patients who have been involved in a nuclear or radiological event. A chart defining radiation terms is particularly useful in helping lay the groundwork for understanding the relative risk of exposure to different levels of radiation. The authors walk the clinician through the initial presentation of patients with different levels of exposure. Assessment and treatment regimens include a discussion of sample handling requirements to avoid self-contamination and further contamination of the environment. [View Article](#)

FDA Approves First of New Class of AIDS Drugs

14 March – CNN reported patients who are running out of medicines to fight the AIDS virus won a new option as the government approved a dramatically different anti-HIV drug. Fuzeon is the first in a new class of medications, called fusion inhibitors that fight AIDS in a completely new way. As many as 100,000 U.S. patients could benefit, and experts predict a flurry of new research will produce more drugs like it. Manufacturers said the drug -- expected to cost about \$20,000 per year -- should be available by month's end, though only to a limited number of people at first. Fuzeon works by preventing the AIDS virus from invading the white blood cells that are the primary targets of HIV. By contrast, today's AIDS drugs all work after the virus already has invaded those cells, by blocking either of two substances that HIV uses to reproduce and spread. The Food and Drug Administration approved Fuzeon for adults and for children age 6 and older. [View Article](#)

First Treatment for Peanut Allergies Developed

12 March – CNN News reported researchers have developed the first drug that may protect the 1.5 million Americans who are allergic to peanuts -- the leading cause of all allergy deaths. The monthly shots are not a cure. But doctors believe the still-experimental drug should let people avoid severe complications if they unknowingly eat one or two peanuts, the typical accidental exposure. "Basically, we would not be seeing people in the emergency room or the morgue from peanut accidents," said Dr. S. Allan Bock, an allergist from Boulder, Colorado, who was not part of the study. However, the drug is a few years away from going on the market. Its critical third round of tests has been stalled by legal infighting among the three companies with rights to it. And Dr. Hugh A. Sampson of Mount Sinai Medical School in New York said patients would need lifelong monthly shots of the drug, called TNX-901, and still would have to guard against eating peanuts. [View Article](#)

Hepatitis E Virus Epidemiology in Industrialized Countries

March – The Journal of *Emerging Infectious Diseases* published a study to determine the prevalence of Hepatitis E virus (HEV) in industrialized nations. Researchers analyzed urban sewage samples to determine the excretion of HEV strains by the populations of Spain, France, Greece, Sweden, and the United States. Twenty of 46 (43.5%) urban sewage samples collected in Barcelona from 1994 to 2002 tested positive for HEV. 15 HEV strains were identified, which were similar to two HEV isolates previously described in Barcelona in clinical samples and to strains from diverse geographic HEV-nonendemic areas. Also identified were two HEV strains in sewage samples from Washington, D.C., and Nancy, France; these samples were also positive for Hepatitis A virus. Results suggest that HEV may be more prevalent than previously considered in industrialized countries and that variants of the virus circulate simultaneously in one region. [View Article](#)

New Battle Against Post-Polio Sequelae

16 March – VOA News reported while a global initiative is underway to rid the world of polio, some 20 million polio survivors worldwide are waging a new battle against a medical condition called Post-Polio Sequelae. The crippling condition, which weakens victims decades after their initial polio attack, has spurred health care workers to search for an effective treatment. [View Article](#)

Obesity Epidemic Tops 1.7 Billion

17 March – BBC News reported the number of obese people in the world may be as high as 1.7bn, experts have calculated. The International Obesity Taskforce (IOTF) says that the current method of calculating obesity - which gives a figure of around half of this - is flawed. This is because it fails to take into consideration the fact that Asian people seem to be more vulnerable than other racial groups to the effects of excess weight. Professor Philip James, IOTF chairman, said the current under-estimation had contributed to a failure of governments around the world to tackle the growing problem of obesity. [View Article](#)

Pain Pills May Dissolve Alzheimer's Lesions

13 March – Reuters reported common pain pills such as ibuprofen and naproxen may actually dissolve the brain lesions that clog the brains of Alzheimer's patient. The findings may help explain studies that suggest people who frequently take the aspirin-like pills seem to have a lower risk of Alzheimer's, which affects an estimated 4 million Americans. Writing in the journal Neuroscience, the team at the University of California Los Angeles said they made the discovery using a new chemical marker called FDDNP. It attaches to the amyloid plaques that mark Alzheimer's, allowing scientists to watch their progression. These plaques eventually kill brain cells, leading to the progressive loss of memory and brain function that debilitates and kills Alzheimer's patients. Using brain tissue in laboratory dishes, the team showed that FDDNP goes straight for the damaging protein plaques. When they added ibuprofen and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, the plaques seemed to break up. [View Article](#)

SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome): WHO and CDC Issue Health Alerts

15 March – Reuters reported the World Health Organization (WHO) issued a rare emergency travel advisory about the highly contagious, atypical pneumonia, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), saying it was now a "global health threat." [View Article](#) In addition, in response to the increasing numbers of cases of SARS, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced several steps to alert US health authorities at the local and state levels. The federal public health agency issued a health alert to hospitals and clinicians on Saturday, 15 March; they also briefed state health officials. The CDC is investigating the illness among travelers who may have passed through the United States after potentially being exposed to the virus. Scientists have been deployed to assist the WHO in the global investigation. The CDC has been working with the World Health Organization (WHO) since late February to investigate and confirm outbreaks of this severe form of pneumonia in Viet Nam, Hong Kong, and parts of China. No cases have been identified to date in the United States. [View Press Release](#) [Interim Guidelines for Caretakers](#) [WHO SARS Site](#)

SARS Virus Identified

18 March – ProMed reported a team from the Prince of Wales Hospital and Chinese University of Hong Kong has identified the virus that has caused the recent outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome worldwide, confirming that the current anti-viral treatment applied to patients has been the right choice. Identifying the virus as a member of the Paramyxoviridae family, the family of microbes that causes measles, mumps and canine distemper. Professor John Tam of the department of microbiology of the Chinese University said it was detected by

electron microscopy. The finding, announced late last night, was further confirmed by a molecular technique that revealed the nucleic acid sequence of the virus. Lo Wing-lok, Medical Association president and legislator, said the Paramyxoviridae family incorporated different viruses that could affect humans and, as such, further studies were needed to establish whether it was a new virus. [View Report 1](#) [View Report 2](#) [View Report 3](#)

Scientists Track Source of Mystery Pneumonia

19 March – Reuters reported doctors said on Wednesday they were homing in on a possible cause and source of a mysterious global outbreak of pneumonia, naming a family of viruses responsible for everyday measles and more exotic diseases such as Nipah virus. Teams in Hong Kong and Germany said they found evidence of a virus known as a paramyxovirus in some of the patients with the illness, called severe acute respiratory syndrome. Hong Kong health officials identified a hotel as the likely source of the territory's outbreak. They said a doctor from China's Guangdong province stayed at the Metropole Hotel in the Special Administrative Region's Kowloon district and infected six other people before he died earlier this month. Health experts stressed that more tests are needed before the virus is pinned down as the culprit, but they said it is the best clue yet about the cause of the syndrome, which may have killed as many as 14 people and sickened hundreds more. "From the shape of the virus, it belongs to the paramyxoviridae family," said microbiologist John Tam of the Prince of Wales Hospital in Hong Kong. [View Article](#)

Sustained Reduced Sleep Can Have Serious Consequences

12 March – The NIH reported in a study on the effects of sleep deprivation, investigators at the University of Pennsylvania found that subjects who slept four to six hours a night for fourteen consecutive nights showed significant deficits in cognitive performance equivalent to going without sleep for up to three days in a row. Yet these subjects reported feeling only slightly sleepy and were unaware of how impaired they were. The results provide a clearer picture of possible dangers to people who typically are awake longer on a regular basis, including members of the military, medical and surgical residents, and shift workers. Reduced cognitive abilities can occur even with a moderate reduction in sleep. Cognitive performance deficits included reduced ability to pay attention and react to a stimulus, such as when driving, or monitoring at airports. Other deficits involved impairment of the ability to think quickly and not make mistakes, and a reduced ability to multi-task — to hold thoughts in the brain in some order while doing something else. [View Article](#)

Tropical Worm 'Relieves Pain'

17 March – BBC News reported a tropical worm could one day help to relieve the pain of millions of people with rheumatoid arthritis and similar diseases. Researchers in Scotland have found that secretions from a parasitic worm, called a filarial nematode, have an anti-inflammatory effect. They believe the discovery could help people with autoimmune diseases - conditions where the body's own immune system attacks itself for no apparent reason. The worm lives off humans and is carried by hundreds of millions of people in the tropics, where the incidence of autoimmune disease is much lower. [View Article](#)

USEUCOM

Belgium: Avian Influenza Suspected

12 March – ProMed reported highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) is seriously suspected in Belgium. It relates to a poultry plant in Ravels, near Poppel -- just a few yards from the border with the Dutch province North Brabant, under the city of Tilburg. The Belgian Food Agency has imposed a buffer zone covering the communities Ravels and Baarle-Hertog. The control measures in this area are similar to the ones implemented in the Netherlands. According to the spokesperson of the federal Food Agency, the suspicion was raised when 2000 (out of 12,000) chickens died. A veterinarian also observed clinical signs and subsequently alarmed the federal Food Agency. Confirmation of HPAI is pending. [View Report](#)

Lyme Disease Cases Increasing in Holland

14 March – Reuters reported the incidence of Lyme disease has doubled in the Netherlands in the past seven years, partly because more people are camping in areas where disease-carrying ticks are common, Dutch officials report. In a survey of doctors throughout the country last year, researchers found 13,000 reports of Lyme disease. In a similar study in 1995, doctors reported about 6,500 cases, according to researchers at the National Institute of Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) and Wageningen University. The greatest increase in infections was seen in the generally rural provinces of Brabant, Limburg and North-Groningen. These provinces have also seen a rise in the numbers of people camping out--the report's figures show a three-fold increase in the numbers of tourists visiting these areas. Although ticks are found mostly in wooded nature preserves, the study also pointed out that high concentrations are seen in the sandy area of Veluwe in the eastern part of the country. While 10 percent of people infected with the bacteria do not develop symptoms, care should always be taken after walking areas where ticks are known to carry the disease. [View Article](#)

Medical Practices Not Primary Mode of HIV Infection in Africa, UN Meeting Finds

14 March – AllAfrica.com reported contrary to recent suggestions that a majority of HIV infections in sub-Saharan Africa are due to unsafe medical practices, an expert group convened by the United Nations reaffirmed that unsafe sex remains the primary mode of transmission in the region. Following a review of the evidence, experts convened in Geneva by the World Health Organization and the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS concluded that current epidemiological and biomedical data does not support the claim that the majority of HIV infections in sub-Saharan Africa are due to unsafe injections in healthcare contexts. The meeting participants said that while they fully agreed that safe medical injections are a crucial component of a comprehensive response to minimize the transmission of HIV, safer sex promotion must remain the primary feature of prevention programmes in sub-Saharan Africa. [View Article](#)

Meningococcal Disease in Niger

13 March – Promed reported as of 9 Mar 2003, the Ministry of Health of Niger has reported a total of 2056 cases, including 195 deaths in the country since the outbreak began in February

2003. Of the 42 districts in Niger, 3 districts have reached the epidemic threshold: Magaria, Aguié, and Matameye, and 4 districts are in the alert phase: Madarounfa, Madaoua, Tahoua, and Mirriah. Laboratory tests from samples in these districts confirm *Neisseria meningitidis* serogroup A. A mass vaccination campaign is ongoing. [View Report](#)

Netherlands: Fowl Plague Infects 31 People

18 March – ProMed reported the number of people infected by the avian influenza virus has risen to 31. The infection is in the form of conjunctivitis. Most of the strains involved are Influenza A-H7N7 and some are Influenza A-H3N2. Almost all infected people were involved in poultry depopulation activities on infected premises. One case of human-to-human transmission has been reported. According to the Ministry, the eye lesions are not harmful and easy to heal. [View report 1](#) [View Report 2](#) Following the identification of the increasing number of human cases of influenza A/H7N7 associated conjunctivitis, the susceptibility of the virus isolated from the clinical sample of the first reported case was determined in anticipation of the possible use of antivirals for the prophylaxis and treatment of HPAI H7N7. This stock virus was typed as H7 using the hemagglutination inhibition assay with an anti-H7 antiserum. The susceptibility of the virus for the neuraminidase inhibitors oseltamivir (Tamiflu) and zanamivir (Relenza) was tested using a miniaturized format of the fetuin based biochemical assay. Since orally dosed oseltamivir becomes available systemically (highly likely including the conjunctivae via the tear-fluid) whereas zanamivir taken via an inhalator is only locally active in the respiratory tract, Tamiflu was the drug of choice for the prophylaxis and treatment of infection of persons with the H7N7 virus. These measures, call for prophylactic oseltamivir treatment of all persons involved directly in the screening and culling of infected flocks, and therapeutic application in all persons within these groups with conjunctivitis and/or influenza-like illness. [View Report 3](#)

The Republic of the Congo: Number of Ebola Cases Now 120 with 108 Deaths

16 March – ProMed reported the latest official figures for the Ebola hemorrhagic fever outbreak, are 120 cases and 108 deaths since January 2003, all in the Cuvette Ouest Department, in the northwest of the Republic of the Congo. [View Report](#)

USCENTCOM

Saudi Arabia Bans Poultry Imports from EU Due to Bird Flu

16 March – ProMed reported Saudi Arabia has slapped a temporary ban on the import of chicken products from the European Union after the discovery of suspected cases of bird flu in Europe. The Al-Watan daily said the Commerce Ministry has sent its decision to the Council of Saudi Chambers of Commerce and Industry and quality control laboratories instructing them to prevent the entry of any European chicken products. Saudi Arabia imports some 120 000 tons of chicken products annually from the EU valued at 133 million USD. [View Report](#)

USNORTHCOM

Bird Flu Outbreak at Egg Farm in Eastern Connecticut Confirmed

13 March – ProMed reported agriculture officials have confirmed a bird flu outbreak at a major egg farm in Connecticut, which last week had prompted Japan to impose a temporary ban on all U.S. poultry imports. According to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) some chickens at the egg farm have tested positive for a mild form of avian influenza. About 4.7 million birds have been under quarantine since officials began investigating a possible outbreak of the disease at the farm earlier this month. Curlett said Japan has lifted its ban on US poultry imports after US officials had proved that proper measures had been taken to contain the disease, Curlett said. A ban on Connecticut poultry remains in effect. [View Report](#)

FDA Approves Bar Codes for Drugs

13 March — MSNBC News reported supermarket-style bar codes will soon be required on every medication given to hospitalized patients in an effort to ensure they get the right dose of the right drug at the right time. The proposal by the Food and Drug Administration is part of a series of new government steps to help prevent deadly medical mistakes that claim tens of thousands of lives each year. One type of medical mistake is a drug error, such as giving the wrong drug or wrong dose to someone. Scientists estimate at least 7,000 hospitalized patients die annually because of those drug errors alone. Veterans hospitals have found medication errors plummeted after they adopted a bar-code system. The FDA proposal would make it easier for every hospital to adopt such a safety system, by requiring all prescription and over-the-counter drugs administered in hospitals to bear standardized codes. [View Article](#)

Health Dept. Prepares for War

17 March – Newsday reported on the sixth floor of the federal Health and Human Services Department, a former conference room has been converted into a high-tech command center. Created after the 2001 anthrax attacks, the \$3.5-million command center is designed to help federal health officials deal with everything from bioterrorism to national epidemics. These days, the agency is also preparing for war. Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson said it's important in a biological, chemical or radiological attack to have a central location to coordinate an emergency response. And with a potential war with Iraq looming, federal health officials say they must be ready for such attacks. Thompson said, "We are very prepared, and we can respond quickly." Through the command center, Thompson said the agency can also better manage the 600 tons of medical supplies and equipment stored in 12 undisclosed sites across the country. Those supplies, including antibiotics, could be shipped anywhere in the country within seven hours, federal officials say. [View Article](#)

National Vaccine Advisory Committee Report on Strengthening the Vaccine Supply

14 March – The CDC reported the National Vaccine Advisory Committee has released a report entitled "Strengthening the Supply of Routinely Recommended Vaccines in the United States: A Report of the National Vaccine Advisory Committee." The report describes the immediate and contributing factors leading to the 2001--2002 vaccine supply shortages and outlines 12

recommendations to prevent future shortages. The report is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/od/nvpo/nvac-vsr.htm>. [View Article](#)

Ohio Meat Supplier Recalls Ground Beef

13 March – ProMed reported a food processing company is voluntarily recalling about 106,000 pounds of ground beef, and federal officials are testing whether the meat could be responsible for *E. coli* infections in 3 Ohio children. American Foods Group said the beef was processed 24 Jan 2003 at its Sharonville plant and was carried by the Kroger and Meijer chains. None of the beef is currently in stores. The children became ill in early February 2003, all with the same strain of the bacteria. Officials said Wednesday that while bacteria had been found in the recalled beef, it was still being tested to determine whether it caused the children's illnesses. The beef was sold from 25 Jan through 3 Feb 2003 at Kroger stores in Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia; and Meijer stores in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Kentucky. Kroger sold the beef in trays and as hamburger patties with the code numbers 3024 and 3025 below the store logo. The Meijer brand ground chuck was sold in 1-pound trays with the code number 3024 below the UPC bar code. Consumers with questions can call American Foods at 1-800-829-2838. [View Report](#)

Pigeons to Help Detect Chemical, Biological Agents

15 March – VOA News reported U.S. marines in Kuwait will use winged creatures to get an early warning of any possible Iraqi chemical or biological attacks. A company of pigeons Friday joined the gas masks, protective suits and other equipment issued to the marines in the desert. The hope is the pigeons will serve the same function as canaries used in mines to detect explosive gas. The birds are more sensitive to poisonous agents than humans, and die at doses that may not kill humans. [View Article](#)

Some Help Found for Gulf Syndrome

18 March — MSNBC News reported a government study found behavior therapy and exercise may provide some relief for veterans ailing from Gulf War illness; an unexplained set of symptoms that often includes fatigue, pain and memory loss. Although the benefits were modest, the results are the first evidence of potentially helpful treatment for the ailment, the researchers say. In the study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, veterans who received 12 weeks of group therapy or regular aerobic exercise reported improvements in some symptoms — but neither treatment provided much pain relief. The behavior therapy yielded improvements in physical function, which is what it was targeted to treat. Exercise mostly helped relieve fatigue, distress and mental functions. [View Article](#)

Sprouts May Carry Salmonella

16 March – ProMed reported a local sprout producer has issued a recall of its alfalfa sprouts that may be contaminated with salmonella. Harmony Farms issued the recall yesterday after bacteria in the sprouts sickened 9 people in Oregon and southwest Washington. The products are distributed to stores, restaurants, schools, and institutions in Washington, Oregon, Alaska, and Idaho, the company said. The products being recalled are 5-ounce plastic clamshell containers labeled "Fresh Alfalfa Sprouts," "Gourmet Salad Sprouts," and "Fresh Alfalfa &

Oregon Onion Sprouts," as well as alfalfa-sprout packages weighing 1, 2, 3, and 5 pounds. Anyone with these products can return them to where they bought them. [View Report](#)

Study: Beds in US Homes Are Hoppin' with Dust Mites

14 March – Reuters reported more than 80 percent of homes in America have detectable levels of house dust mites, the microscopic critter that triggers dust allergies. Studies have shown that people who are allergic to dust mites may be at risk of developing asthma, a condition that has been on the rise in the US since 1980. Yet despite the association between house dust mite exposure and an increased allergy and asthma risk, no nationwide estimate of house dust mite levels has been reported until now. Based on data from the National Survey of Lead and Allergens in Housing, which included 831 randomly selected households, researchers found that 84 percent of US homes had detectable levels of dust mite allergen in a bed. [View Article](#)

Technical Barriers to Airborne Anthrax Attack May Be Overrated

11 March – CIDRAP News reported the results of a spraying program to control gypsy moths in British Columbia suggest that terrorists could use conventional crop-dusting equipment to spread anthrax spores over a city and potentially infect people, according to a report in a new biodefense journal. The spraying program, which involved *Bacillus thuringiensis*, a close relative of *Bacillus anthracis* (anthrax), produced particles small enough to penetrate into the lungs, according to the report in the debut issue of Biosecurity and Bioterrorism: Biodefense Strategy, Practice, and Science. The particles filtered into houses, the researchers found. The study "provides data that refutes arguments asserting that there are technological barriers that would prevent all but major military programs from using *B. anthracis* as an aerosol disseminated bioweapon," states the report. "These data provide evidence that it is technologically feasible to disseminate biological agents from aircraft (or backpack sprayers, or truck-mounted foggers)." [View Article](#)

Tularemia on Martha's Vineyard: Seroprevalence and Occupational Risk

March – The journal *Emerging Infectious Diseases* published a study where a serosurvey of landscapers was completed to determine if they were at increased risk for exposure to *Francisella tularensis* and to determine risk factors for infection. In Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, landscapers (n=132) were tested for anti-*F. tularensis* antibody and completed a questionnaire. For comparison, serum samples from three groups of nonlandscaper Martha's Vineyard residents (n=103, 99, and 108) were tested. Twelve landscapers (9.1%) were seropositive, compared with one person total from the comparison groups (prevalence ratio 9.0; 95% confidence interval 1.2 to 68.1; p=0.02). Seropositive landscapers worked more hours per week mowing and weed-whacking and mowed more lawns per week than their seronegative counterparts. [View Article](#)

Wedding's Punch Had Contaminant

12 March – ProMed reported an update on the poisoning in Ankeny, Iowa detailed in last week's HIO update. The Iowa state Health Department found toxic levels of a common color additive or preservative used in meat and fish in punch served at a weekend wedding in Ankeny at which dozens became ill. The levels of sodium nitrite were found to be "off the charts," said disease investigator Dr. Tom Boo. The levels caused a rare form of blood poisoning that sent about 60

guests to emergency rooms Saturday. It is still unknown how and where the sodium nitrite got into the punch. [View Report](#)

Women Vets Report High Rape, Sex Harassment Rates

14 March – Reuters reported thirty percent of female US military veterans report having been raped or suffered a rape attempt during their military service, according to a new survey. While the study authors say their research was not intended to estimate how much sexual violence women in the military face, the findings are in line with past research on how often such violence occurs. The research did identify risk factors for rape and sexual harassment; findings that could be used to make the military a safer place for women. More than three-fourths of participants reported some type of sexual harassment during their military experience. Unwanted sexual contact--such as touching or fondling of the buttocks, thigh, breasts or other body part--was reported by 54 percent of women. And 30 percent of females experienced one or more attempted or completed rapes. [View Article](#)

U.S. House Passes Bill Aimed at West Nile Virus

14 March – Reuters Health reported the U.S. House approved a series of public health bills, including one that would give grants and technical assistance to help states eradicate mosquitoes in order to control West Nile virus. The House passed the "Mosquito Abatement for Safety and Health Act" by a vote of 416-9. The bill would authorize \$100 million for the current fiscal year, and unspecified amounts for the next four years for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to make the grants. States could use the grants to coordinate mosquito-control programs statewide, and to provide funds to localities to develop similar plans. The bill requires the CDC to give preference to states with bigger mosquito-borne disease problems "relative to other states." [View Article](#)

USPACOM

18 People Die of Respiratory System Disease in Nepal

17 March – Xinhuanet News reported at least 18 people died in an outbreak of ARI, an infectious disease of the respiratory system, in Kalikot district in western Nepal, according to a local public health official. The people of eight villages in Kalikot district have been seriously affected of the disease. Officials report at least 150 people suffering from ARI are undergoing treatment at various health centers in the district up to now, and more than 20 patients are coming for treatment at the district hospital every day. Necessary medicine and medical personnel have been dispatched to the affected areas. The symptoms of the disease are cough with high fever and a sudden difficulty in breathing. The patient may die after a week of showing such symptoms without receiving proper treatment in time. [View Article](#)

Australia: 16 Cairns Residents Test Positive for Dengue Fever

17 March – ProMed reported health authorities in the far north of Queensland say that they have confirmed two more cases of the potentially fatal dengue fever and have another 60 possible cases on file. Queensland Health says 16 Cairns residents have so far tested positive for the mosquito borne disease during the past two weeks. Tropical Public Health Unit director

Jeffrey Hanna says the situation is similar to the "outbreak" in 1998, which afflicted about 500 people, 100 of who required hospital treatment. Of major concern is that people infected by a different serotype in the 1998 outbreak will be infected again, leaving them vulnerable to the potentially fatal dengue hemorrhagic fever. North Queensland health authorities are working frantically to contain the outbreak. [View Report](#)

Malaysia: Dengue Virus Type 3 Appears in Malaysia

17 March – ProMed reported the appearance of a new serotype of dengue virus in Malaysia has brought about a drastic increase in the disease, with 11 deaths so far this year. Health minister Chua Jui Meng says that the new dengue virus type 3 (DEN-3) has affected a lot of people, as most Malaysians do not have the antibody to this serotype. The health minister has blamed the outbreak on an increase in public apathy to ensuring clean surroundings and an exceptionally heavy rainy season. [View Report](#)

New Caledonia: Dengue Virus Type 1 Outbreak

17 March – ProMed reported since the beginning of 2003 in New Caledonia, a total of 265 laboratory confirmed cases of Dengue have been reported, including more than 150 over the past two weeks. Most of the patients were confirmed on early samples, showing a positive result for dengue virus type 1 (DEN-1) by polymerase chain reaction (PCR). This confirms the rapid spread of the outbreak, which now affects practically all parts of the Northern and Southern Provinces. In the Northern Province it can be noted that the number of foci around the initial one of Poindimie has increased and new ones are currently being described in the municipal districts of Kaala-Gomen, Canala, Houailou, and Hienghene. In the Southern Province, active transmission sites are beginning to emerge in Yate and Thio. Around Noumea, the most affected zone is still the northern part of Mont Dore suburb, but cases are now more frequently observed close to the city center. To date, Pines and Loyalty Islands seem to be still dengue free. [View Report](#)

Vietnam: Dengue Cases Increasing in Mekong Delta

17 March – ProMed reported the Vietnamese Health Ministry said that 1701 people contracted dengue in January and February in Vietnam, a 66 per cent increase over the same period last year, and that 3 people died of the disease. Carlo Urbani, a World Health Organization (WHO) vectorborne disease expert in Hanoi, said it is "too early to say if this year will be the year when dengue reaches epidemic proportions." Health experts say large dengue outbreaks tend to occur every 5 years. The hardest hit provinces this year are in the southern Mekong Delta region, where high humidity provides a good breeding ground for mosquitoes that transmit dengue. [View Report](#)

USSOUTHCOM

Dominican Republic: Detection of West Nile Virus Antibodies in Birds

15 March – ProMed reported the Ministry of Health issued an epidemiologic alert yesterday for febrile illnesses in humans after finding antibodies against West Nile virus (WNV) in birds in the Los Haitises National Park. West Nile virus infection is transmitted to humans through bites

from the mosquito *Culex Quinquefasciatus*, which is abundant in the country. Health authorities cautioned the public not to be alarmed, but to take precautionary measures, such as elimination of mosquito breeding sites, cleaning household surroundings and seeking medical attention when developing symptoms such as fever, headache, and muscular pains. The country has also issued alerts to the Ministries of Health of surrounding countries. [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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