

USACHPPM
HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE

13 August 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 as to its strategic or tactical impact on the US Army and should not be regarded as a medical intelligence product. Medical intelligence products are available from the [Armed Forces Medical Intelligence Center](#). The information in the HIO Update should provide an increased awareness of current and emerging health-related issues.

HOT TOPICS.....	2
Allergy Vaccine Hopes Get Boost.....	2
Bird Flu Is Here To Stay, Say Experts	2
Blood Vessel Changes Predict High Blood Pressure	2
Chicken Pox Vaccine Curbs Severity, Contagiousness of Disease.....	3
<i>E. coli</i> O157:H7 Outbreak in Foodborne Disease Computer-Based Case Study	3
Free Antiretroviral Drugs Cut Taiwan's HIV Transmission Rate in Half.....	3
Lung Trouble Looms for Young Asthmatics.....	3
Patterns: When No Chest Pain Is a Problem.....	4
Protein Vaccine Protects Mice from Lethal Aerosol Challenge with Ricin Toxin	4
Retinal Findings in Severe Malaria Appear Related to Disease	4
Setback for Patients as AIDS Drugs Doubted	5
FOCUS ON EPIDEMIOLOGY	5
DoD-GEIS: West Nile Virus	5
Transmission of Hepatitis B Virus in Correctional Facilities.....	5
USCENTCOM	6
Ebola Outbreak in Southern Sudan is Over, UN Health Agency Announces	6
Turkmenistan - An 'Illegal' Outbreak of Plague.....	6
USEUCOM	7
Central African Republic: Thousands of Children Vaccinated Against Polio	7
Dirty Water Provokes Hepatitis Outbreak in Darfur	7
Ghana: Global Fund Urges Wider Use of Impregnated Mosquito Nets	7
Guinea: Cholera Epidemic Kills 23 People	8
South African Bird Flu: Water May be the Source	8
The Netherlands: Norovirus Outbreak at Jamboree	8
USNORTHCOM	9
4 Bacteria Strains Suspected In Outbreak.....	9
6 Students Remain in Hospital after Becoming Ill at UM	9
27 Instances of Flea-Borne Murine Typhus Reported in Corpus Christi.....	9
Gun Access Laws Cut Teen Suicide Rate	9
Immigration Questions Worry Hospitals.....	10
Powder Shuts Down Pontiac City Hall	10
Riverside County Botulism Outbreak Briefly Uses up Antitoxin Supply	10
Tularemia Cases on Martha's Vineyard Puzzle Experts.....	10
US Latinos Have High Rates of Eye Disease and Visual Impairment	10
USDA Finding <i>Salmonella</i> Less Often In Meat.....	11
USPACOM	11

Bangladesh: Over 85,000 Cases of Diarrhea; Dengue Reported in Dhaka.....	11
Chinese Not Fully Knowledgeable About AIDS	11
Gastro Bug Strikes Hospital Staff	11
Nepal: Nearly 120 Die over the Past Week Due to Waterborne Diseases	12
Philippines: Health Officials Declare Rabies Outbreak as 5 Die In Koronadal	12
USSOUTHCOM.....	12
Brazil Plans 3 Billion Free Condoms for AIDS Fight.....	12

HOT TOPICS

Allergy Vaccine Hopes Get Boost

10 August – BBC News reported that medical researchers have obtained promising results from a trial of a genetically-engineered [allergy](#) vaccine. During the trial, the vaccine significantly reduced peoples' allergic response to pollen. It is estimated that around a quarter of the world's population is allergic to something. Some allergies, such as asthma, can be life-threatening. They are caused by the body's immune system over-reacting to a substance which is in fact harmless. Vaccines against diseases like measles or polio are intended to make the immune system turn on. But an allergy vaccine needs to do the opposite. The team has genetically-engineered the pollen of birch trees so that in the bodies of allergy sufferers it produces antibodies which greatly reduce the immune response. It also reduces the response to some other types of pollen as well. By using genetic-engineering, this research team has managed to produce the benefit without the side-effects. [View Article](#)

Bird Flu Is Here To Stay, Say Experts

9 August – SMH.com.au reported that international health authorities tracking the spread of [bird flu](#) across South-East Asia have concluded the virus is so deeply entrenched there is no hope of eliminating it - only of controlling it. Attempts to control avian flu in Asia, where there are huge commercial farms and vast numbers of backyard poultry, have relied on killing flocks where infected birds have been found. Recent research findings, though, have demonstrated that migrating wild birds commonly carry H5N1 avian flu, posing a constant risk of reinfection to domestic birds. Those findings have prompted authorities to consider vaccinating birds when H5N1 flu outbreaks begin, and restricting the movement of birds. [View Article](#)

Blood Vessel Changes Predict High Blood Pressure

9 August - Reuters Health reported that structural changes in small blood vessels may precede the development of severe [high blood pressure](#). Whether such changes alone predict high blood pressure was unclear. Researchers monitored blood pressures in 3,654 older subjects. Photographs of the retina were also taken at the beginning of the study and analyzed for blood vessel narrowing. Of the 2,335 subjects who returned for examination 5 years later, the researchers focused on 1,319 who had normal or just slightly elevated blood pressure when they entered the study. Nearly 30 percent of subjects developed severe high blood pressure. After factoring in various risk factors, the researchers found that the subjects with the narrowest retinal vessels were 2.6-times more likely to develop severe high blood pressure than those with the widest vessels. [View Article](#)

Chicken Pox Vaccine Curbs Severity, Contagiousness of Disease

10 August – HealthDayNews reported that when vaccinated children vaccinated for [chickenpox](#) still get the disease, they are only half as contagious as unvaccinated kids. While in the average case a child has 200 to 400 lesions, 'breakthrough' cases get fewer than 50 lesions. Researchers tracked more than 6,000 cases of chicken pox among children aged 1 to 14 years. The spread of the disease within a household was 71 percent if the children exposed to chicken pox by another household member were not vaccinated, but just 15 percent if they were inoculated. The chicken pox vaccine was licensed in the United States in 1995. Before the vaccine was available, about 4 million children a year got chicken pox, with more than 10,000 hospitalizations and 100 deaths. Now, the number of cases has declined by about 85 percent. [View Article](#)

E. coli O157:H7 Outbreak in Foodborne Disease Computer-Based Case Study

11 August – The Journal of the American Medical Association reported that CDC has released a new computer-based case study, "[E. coli](#) O157:H7 Infection in Michigan." Based on a real-life disease outbreak investigation, this self-instructional, interactive exercise teaches public health practitioners epidemiologic skills and allows them to practice these skills. In the case study, students work through the *E. coli* O157:H7 investigation from beginning to end. The new case study is the second in the Foodborne Disease Outbreak Investigation Case Study Series. The case study was developed in collaboration with the original investigators from CDC and the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists. "[E. coli](#) O157:H7 Infection in Michigan" can be downloaded free of charge at this [CDC website](#). Continuing education credit is offered to those who complete the case studies. [View Article](#)

Free Antiretroviral Drugs Cut Taiwan's HIV Transmission Rate in Half

4 August – EurekAlert reported that a government policy of providing [HIV](#)-infected citizens with free access to potent regimens of antiretroviral drugs reduced the rate of HIV transmission by 53% in Taiwan. Investigators evaluated how cost-free provision of an anti-HIV regimen known as highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) affected the evolution of the HIV epidemic in Taiwan. Previous research has shown that HAART prolongs the survival of HIV-infected individuals and reduces rates of mother-to-child and heterosexual transmission of the virus. All men in Taiwan are tested at 20 years of age as part of mandatory military service. The government adopted a policy to provide all HIV-infected citizens requiring therapy with free access to HAART through its national health insurance program. Their model indicated that the estimated HIV transmission rate decreased by 53%. [View Article](#)

Lung Trouble Looms for Young Asthmatics

10 August – HealthDayNews reported that in children with [asthma](#), as many as 20 percent of them will see their lungs lose strength over a five-year period. Researchers examined the medical records of 990 American children with mild to moderate asthma who were studied for about five years. All the children received albuterol, a common asthma medication. Some received one of two inhaled anti-inflammatory drugs -- budesonide and nedocromil -- or a placebo that provided no medical benefit. Doctors regularly measured the effectiveness of their lungs. About 20 percent of the children lost more than 1 percent each year of the normal lung capacity they should have had. Their lungs declined no matter whether they had mild or moderate asthma or whether they took one of the steroid drugs or a placebo. Boys were more likely to suffer from declining lung function. Szefer doesn't know if the children will notice the changes. [View Article](#)

Patterns: When No Chest Pain Is a Problem

10 August – the New York Times reported that [heart attacks](#) that are not accompanied by chest pain are more deadly, more apt to be missed and receive worse treatment even after they are recognized. Researchers looked at data from 14 countries on 20,881 patients hospitalized for acute coronary syndromes. Of those, 8 percent did not report chest pain. Older patients, women and diabetics were more likely to fall into this group. The researchers found that the conditions of about a quarter of such patients were initially misdiagnosed, compared with only 2 percent of patients with chest pain. Other symptoms of a heart attack can include faintness, shortness of breath, heavy sweating or nausea. The patients without chest pain were less likely to be given drugs to thin their blood to reduce the risk of further damage, or to undergo surgical intervention. The study found a significant difference in death rates during hospitalization: 13 percent for patients without chest pain versus 4 percent for those with chest pain. [View Article](#)

Protein Vaccine Protects Mice from Lethal Aerosol Challenge with Ricin Toxin

4 August – EurekAlert reported that scientists have developed an experimental vaccine against [ricin](#), a potential biological threat agent, which fully protected mice from aerosol challenge with lethal doses of the toxin. The study was performed at the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases. When inhaled as a small-particle aerosol, ricin produces severe respiratory symptoms followed by respiratory failure within 72 hours. When ingested, ricin can cause severe gastrointestinal symptoms followed by vascular collapse and death. Given its ready availability and its high level of toxicity--particularly when delivered as an aerosol--ricin is a significant potential agent of biological warfare or terrorism. Currently, there is no vaccine or therapy available for human use. To improve upon the stability of the protein subunit ricin A-chain (RTA) which effectively stops new protein synthesis and causes cell death, researchers had to change the structure of the RTA molecule. RTA 1-33/44-198, the most promising vaccine candidate, protected 10 out of 10 mice from a whole-body aerosol challenge with lethal doses of ricin. The survival rate was the same with or without the adjuvant. All 10 animals in the unvaccinated control group died. [View Article](#)

Research Hints at a Wider Human Spread of Mad Cow

7 August – The International Herald Tribune reported that the human form of [mad cow disease](#) might be hitting a wider proportion of people, but it is possible that some may develop a milder version of the illness. So far, autopsy tests have found mad cow, a fatal brain-wasting disease, only in people who have a certain genetic profile. However, scientists found the infection in a person with a more common genetic signature and no symptoms of the illness. It is unclear how dangerous such cases might be. The latest discovery was made during an autopsy of an elderly person who had died of an unrelated cause but had received a blood transfusion five years ago from a donor who later developed and died of the human form of mad cow disease. The genetic profile in this case was one that occurs in half of all Caucasians but is less common among other ethnicities. It is the second case linked to a blood transfusion, bolstering suspicions that the infection can be passed through blood. [View Article](#)

Retinal Findings in Severe Malaria Appear Related to Disease

9 August – EurekAlert reported that retinal findings in children with severe forms of [malaria](#) (with brain involvement and severe anemia) appear related to disease outcomes such as prolonged coma and death. Severe forms of malaria still have high rates of death and disability (including coma) in sub-Saharan Africa, and cause 1.5 to 2.7 million deaths each year, mostly in African children with cerebral malaria (CM) or severe malarial anemia (SMA). "In childhood cerebral malaria, severity of retinopathy

is related to prolonged coma and death," the researchers write. "Our results support the hypothesis that retinal signs in cerebral malaria are related to cerebral pathophysiology [disease]." [View Article](#)

Setback for Patients as AIDS Drugs Doubted

9 August – AllAfrica.com reported that [AIDS](#) drugs may be beyond reach of many patients in Kenya following removal of three Indian-made drugs from the World Health Organisation list of medicines. The inexpensive Indian drugs cannot be bought or used by an AIDS treatment program supported by or affiliated to the United Nations. The new move will force many African Governments and non-governmental organizations that buy generic medicines from India to change their drug policy. Further, the drugs cannot be used by projects supported by President George W. Bush's \$15 billion Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. The drugs in question belong to the class of medicines called fixed dose combinations, which combine several ARVs in one tablet. Scientists have said that combining AIDS drugs in one tablet simplifies treatment. In East Africa, there are about 40,000 HIV-positive on ARVs, many of them on NGO or church-funded programs using generics imported from India, Thailand or Brazil. [View Article](#)

Focus on Epidemiology

DoD-GEIS: West Nile Virus

12 August - CDC reported in the 5 August [MMWR](#) that during the week 26 July- 3 August in the US, a total of 141 cases of human [West Nile virus](#) (WNV) illness were reported from 11 states (Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Nevada, New York, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Texas). Arizona and California have reported the highest numbers of cases this year. According to the article, a total of 20 states reported a total of 406 cases, with 7 deaths, of human WNV illness to CDC through ArboNET. Of the cases 57% were males; the median age was 51 years with an age range of 1 month to 99 years, and the date of illness onset was 20 April to 29 July. Subsequently those totals were updated (ArboNET as of 10 August) to reflect 495 human cases with 10 deaths and 192 cases of neuroinvasive disease. Of these, 247 (61%) were reported from Arizona, 102 from California and 44 from Colorado. In contrast Nebraska, which had an experience similar to Colorado last year, reported only one case so far this year. A total of 46 presumptive West Nile viremic blood donors (PVDs) have been reported this year as of 10 August. Of these, 33 were from Arizona, 7 from California, 3 from South Dakota and one each from Colorado, Iowa, and New Mexico. Of the PVDs, two persons (ages 66 and 69 years) developed neuroinvasive illness, and 7 had West Nile fever. Additional information about national surveillance of WNV activity, including useful links to clinical, laboratory and other guidance is available from [CDC](#) and the [US Geological Survey](#). Surveillance data by state and county for birds, veterinary cases, sentinel flocks and humans is regularly aggregated, updated and displayed. *Information on many "hot topics" such as WNV, Influenza (avian and human), Leishmaniasis and severe respiratory syndromes, including SARS, is available from [DoD-GEIS](#).*

Transmission of Hepatitis B Virus in Correctional Facilities

5 August – MMWR reported that incarcerated persons have a disproportionate burden of infectious diseases including [hepatitis B](#) virus (HBV) infection. Among U.S. adult prison inmates, the overall prevalence of current or previous HBV infection ranges from 13% to 47%. The prevalence of chronic HBV infection among inmates is approximately 1.0%--3.7%, two to six times the prevalence among adults in the general U.S. population. Incarcerated persons can acquire HBV infection in the community or in correctional settings. A new report summarizes the results of 1) an analysis of

hepatitis B cases among Georgia inmates reported to the Georgia Department of Human Resources, Division of Public Health during January 1999--June 2002, including a retrospective investigation of cases reported during January 2001--June 2002; and 2) a prevalence survey conducted in prison intake centers during February--March 2003. These efforts identified cases of acute hepatitis B in multiple Georgia prisons and documented evidence of ongoing transmission of HBV in the state correctional system. The findings underscore the need for hepatitis B vaccination programs in correctional facilities. [View Report](#)

Other timely information can be found in:

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 Outbreak in Southern Sudan is Over, UN Health Agency Announces

6 August – The UN News Centre reported that thanks to the effective coordination among national and international health officials, the United Nations today declared the [Ebola virus](#) outbreak in southern Sudan over. No new cases have been reported in the past 42 days. Seven people died out of the 17 people infected with the hemorrhagic fever. The disease is transmitted by direct contact with any bodily fluids of infected persons. Local community advocates relayed vital messages about disease prevention and care to the people in and around Yambio. A low fence built at an isolation ward at Yambio Hospital allowed patients to be effectively isolated, yet able to chat with family and friends from a safe distance. Such simple disease control measures made it easier for families to accept the isolation of their relatives. The Yambio experience showed the value of rapid outbreak detection, effective local responses, active community involvement and the coordination of specialized help from international agencies and non-governmental organizations to contain the spread of the virus. [View Article](#)

Turkmenistan - An 'Illegal' Outbreak of Plague

8 August – LATimes.com reported that Turkmenistan is ruled by a 64-year-old dictator named who calls himself Turkmenbashi and who has taken the health of his nation's 5 million people into his own hands with potentially devastating consequences. In March, he dismissed 15,000 licensed healthcare workers "to save money" and replaced them with conscripts. In June, he fired Turkmen doctors and other health workers with foreign degrees, saying their training was "incompatible with the Turkmen education system." He has declared all infectious diseases illegal and has forbidden any mention of them. According to Gundogar, a Turkmen opposition group, and the Turkmenistan Helsinki Initiative, a deadly [plague](#) epidemic has broken out in the Turkmenbashi's territory. These outbreaks happen periodically, and with good public health systems in place they can be managed. But the Soviets and their plague experts no longer run the show. At least 10 people are known to have died of plague this summer, and some reports place the figure considerably higher. Uzbekistan has tightened border controls to prevent panicked or sick people from slipping over the border. Seven mobile anti-epidemic teams have also been sent to patrol the region. [View Article](#)

WHO Action in Afghanistan Aims to Control Debilitating Leishmaniasis

10 August – The WHO reported that a rapid intervention in Kabul, Afghanistan, made possible by a donation from the Belgian government, should dramatically reduce the incidence of [leishmaniasis](#) in less than two years. Without immediate action, the current epidemic threatens to escalate into an uncontrollable situation. Kabul is the largest center of cutaneous leishmaniasis in the world, with an estimated 67,500 cases with 200,000 cases in all of Afghanistan. Cutaneous leishmaniasis is a disabling disease transmitted by the bite of the sand fly. The disease leads to disfigurement usually on the face and hands, and social stigma, particularly for women and children. The provision of first-line drugs has been secured by WHO in collaboration with Afghanistan's Ministry of Health. At the same time, 16,000 insecticide-treated bednets will be distributed throughout Kabul. [View Press Release](#)

USEUCOM

Central African Republic: Thousands of Children Vaccinated Against Polio

9 August – IRIN News reported that a weeklong door-to-door anti-[polio](#) drive in the Central African Republic followed the outbreak of two cases of a deadly form of "wild polio" in June 2004 in the northern prefecture of Mambere Kadei. Health workers vaccinated approximately 3,000 children. The Ministry of Public Health and Population organized the campaign, in conjunction with the UN Children's Fund and the UN World Health Organization. The campaign was to administer the final second dose of the anti-polio vaccine. The first dose had been administered in November and December of 2003. Children in three principal towns cut off by the war did not get their first dose until May. In addition to the vaccine, the health workers also provided chewable capsules of vitamin A, because many rural people are deficient in the vitamin. [View Article](#)

Dirty Water Provokes Hepatitis Outbreak in Darfur

9 August – Reuters reported that an outbreak of [hepatitis E](#) among refugees from the conflict in Sudan's Darfur region. The outbreak of the viral liver infection, for which there is no vaccine, comes early in the rainy season and could herald other, more deadly epidemics. Hepatitis E, caught from dirty water or food, typically strikes people between the ages of 15 and 40 and kills five per cent of victims. Aid workers have warned of cholera, dysentery and malaria outbreaks in Darfur, where more than one million people have been displaced by a conflict that began early last year. The WHO said the area around the Kalma and Musei camps in southern Darfur had already been sprayed against mosquitoes, and that spraying around camps in the north would begin this week and in west Darfur on August 20. A first round of cholera vaccination was completed in late July at Kalma camp, and a second round of distribution of the oral vaccine began at the weekend. Between two and five percent of children under five in Darfur were severely malnourished, and up to 20 percent had less acute malnutrition. [View Article](#)

Ghana: Global Fund Urges Wider Use of Impregnated Mosquito Nets

5 August – IRIN News reported that Ghana lags behind most of Africa when it comes to using insecticide-treated [malaria](#) nets. Just three percent of the Ghanaian population uses the treated nets over their beds, whereas the average in most African countries is between 25 and 40 percent. More than three million Ghanaians catch malaria every year and 16,000 children are killed by it. In Ghana, the Health Ministry is currently offering a 60 percent discount on insecticide treated nets for all

pregnant or nursing mothers. Since 2002, the Global Fund has pledged \$68.1 million to help Ghana fight three of the world's most deadly diseases. Malaria accounts for more than two thirds of these funds – the rest goes toward fighting AIDS and tuberculosis. [View Article](#)

Guinea: Cholera Epidemic Kills 23 People

6 August – IRIN News reported that torrential rains and inadequate supplies of safe drinking water have led to a [cholera](#) epidemic in Guinea which has so far killed 23 people. Health officials said that 183 cases of cholera had been reported throughout the country, of which 93 came from the district around Kindia. Cholera causes violent diarrhea and vomiting which can prove fatal unless treated quickly. Cholera is a perennial hazard during the rainy season in much of West Africa as latrines overflow and wells become polluted. [View Article](#)

South Africa Bans Poultry Exports as Bird Flu Strikes Ostrich Industry

10 August – Canada.com reported that an outbreak of [bird flu](#) has killed 6,000 ostriches in the past three weeks, leading authorities to ban all poultry exports from South Africa. Authorities have identified the strain of avian influenza as H5N2, regarded as less dangerous than the H5N1 variety, which ravaged chicken farms across Asia and crossed over to humans earlier this year. The South African outbreak poses little risk to humans. The country supplies about 70 per cent of the world's ostrich meat, but the main source of ostrich revenue is from the bird's skin, which is used to make handbags, shoes, jackets and other leather goods. The first cases were reported in Middleton. Fifteen farms within a 14-kilometre radius of the initial outbreak have been quarantined. "We have 30,000 ostriches in that radius, and we will begin tests and culling where necessary said Dr. Johann van Wyk, head of animal health at the Department of Agriculture and Land. "At this stage it is unlikely we will have to cull all the birds." Police and military have also set up checkpoints up to 29 kilometers away to prevent the movement of birds in or out of the quarantined area. [View Article](#)

South African Bird Flu: Water May be the Source

11 August – News 24.com reported that the South African Veterinary Association (SAVA) "strongly suspect" that the use of untreated surface water transferred the [avian influenza virus](#) to ostrich flocks in the Eastern Cape. Open dams or free-running water may have spread the virus to ostriches, which should drink treated water. "It is... important to discourage the interaction of wild birds with ostriches and free range poultry," said SAVA president Prof Banie Penzhorn. He said in practice this meant changing feeding methods so that all food is consumed, not the common approach of feeding once a day or even once every few days. "Leftover feed attracts wild birds," he said. He said virus identification tests conducted confirm the virus as an H5N2 type that is potentially highly pathogenic and dangerous to poultry, with the virus "unlikely to affect humans". [View Article](#)

The Netherlands: Norovirus Outbreak at Jamboree

11 August – ProMED reported that a [norovirus](#) outbreak in a summer camp of scouts in the Netherlands has affected approximately 250 people (scouts and staff members) out of 4500 attendees, of whom 35 fell ill on the last night. Two children were ill before the start of the camp on 26 July. In general, symptoms were mild with most of the people experiencing vomiting and diarrhea; however, 42 patients were submitted to a local hospital for rehydration. Hygienic measures have been put in place in order to contain the outbreak. [View Article](#)

USNORTHCOM

4 Bacteria Strains Suspected In Outbreak

7 August – The Pittsburgh Tribune Review reported that the [salmonellosis](#) outbreak that sickened at least 416 people in five states might have been caused by four bacterial strains, an unusual occurrence. Investigators suspect that all strains were found on contaminated Roma tomatoes served at convenience stores owned by Altoona-based Sheetz. Salmonella's *Javiana* strain has infected 324 of the 330 people with confirmed salmonellosis cases in Pennsylvania. Health officials in Ohio, West Virginia, Maryland and Virginia have confirmed 86 salmonellosis cases linked to the outbreak, and are investigating at least 51 others. A second strain, *Anatum*, is the only one found on the more than 260 samples of food. Another rare salmonella strain, *Thompson* strain and a fourth variant, *Muenchen*, each infected about one dozen people. An animal could carry more than one strain and contaminate food growing in the field, the CDC said. [View Article](#)

6 Students Remain in Hospital after Becoming Ill at UM

10 August – The Baltimore Sun reported that six high school students remained hospitalized with apparent [food poisoning](#) yesterday after they became ill while staying at the University of Maryland, College Park. More than 70 students were treated at two hospitals Sunday after they became ill while staying at the college, where they were participating in a National Student Leadership Conference. The students were expected to be released today. The source of the illness was unclear. All of the ill students were staying in the LaPlata Hall dormitory, which has since been evacuated. Not every LaPlata resident became sick, he said, and the healthy students have been moved to other housing on campus. [View Article](#) (registration required)

27 Instances of Flea-Borne Murine Typhus Reported in Corpus Christi

10 August - The Corpus Christi Caller-Times reported that Nueces County is in the early stages of a [murine typhus](#) outbreak. At least 27 people have suffered the 102- to 103-degree fevers, severe headaches and flu-like symptoms of the illness. In a normal year, 14 to 20 cases of typhus are reported in Nueces County. Typhus is a bacteriological infection carried by infected fleas - specifically, fleas found on cats, possums and rats. The infection can be treated with antibiotics and some cases can be cleared up within a day, but if left untreated, the disease could last for several months and require hospitalization. [View Article](#) (registration required)

Gun Access Laws Cut Teen Suicide Rate

9 August – LATimes.com reported that laws passed by 18 states requiring guns to be safely stored away from children have reduced the rate of teenage [suicides](#). The child access prevention laws implemented since 1989 may have prevented more than 300 suicides among 14- to 17-year-olds through 2001, according to Daniel Webster of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Suicide is the third-leading cause of death among American teenagers, accounting for 1,883 deaths in 2001. "There were 63,954 suicides among youth aged 14 through 20 years during the 1976-2001 study period, 39,655 (62%) of which were committed with firearms." However, laws that raised the required age of gun buyers and owners did not significantly reduce suicide rates. [View Article](#)

Immigration Questions Worry Hospitals

10 August – HealthDayNews reported that hospital officials are concerned about having to ask patients about their immigration status in order to qualify for their share of \$1 billion in U.S. government money to provide emergency care to undocumented immigrants. This kind of questioning could discourage those immigrants from seeking necessary hospital care, say hospital officials and advocates for immigrants. Congress made the decision last year to make the money available to hospitals but guidelines developed in recent weeks require hospitals to ask patients about their immigration status. The guidelines are supposed to ensure that the money will be used to help undocumented immigrants get emergency medical care, federal officials said. [View Article](#)

Powder Shuts Down Pontiac City Hall

12 August – The Detroit Free Press reported that an envelope containing a powdery substance and a note that read, "You have been exposed to [anthrax](#)," forced the evacuation of Pontiac, MI City Hall. An envelope containing the powder arrived at the mayor's office at noon Wednesday, forcing the shutdown of City Hall about 30 minutes later. The envelope, which was opened by staff, was addressed to Payne. Almost 100 people were quarantined and then evacuated from the building by 2 p.m. The powder is being tested by the FBI. [View Article](#)

Riverside County Botulism Outbreak Briefly Uses up Antitoxin Supply

5 August – The Mercury News reported that treating five inmates for [botulism](#) contracted from a prison-made alcoholic concoction wiped out the Southwest's supply of antitoxin for a day. Inmates at Ironwood State Prison near Blyth, California became ill after drinking an illicitly fermented brew known as pruno at an inmate birthday party. One inmate remained hospitalized. Another tested negative for botulism. The cost of medical care for the inmates was more than \$352,000. Botulism is a food-borne, potentially lethal paralytic condition. A supply of antitoxin for the southwestern United States is kept at U.S. Public Health Service quarantine stations at eight airports. [View Article](#)

Tularemia Cases on Martha's Vineyard Puzzle Experts

11 August - CIDRAP News reported that Martha's Vineyard, the island off Cape Cod, MA, has had a string of [tularemia](#) cases. For the fifth summer, people are falling ill with the rare pneumonic form of tularemia, one of the six diseases considered most likely to be spread by terrorists. The illness is spread through bites from ticks, deerflies, or other insects; handling infected animal carcasses; eating or drinking contaminated food or water; or inhaling the bacteria. The disease can be fatal if not treated with the right antibiotics. So far this summer, one patient has been confirmed to have pneumonic tularemia and one other has a probable case. Landscapers are consistently more likely than others to contract tularemia than non-landscapers are. People who contracted pneumonic tularemia were more likely to have recently used brush-cutting or mowing equipment. Exposure likely occurred by inhaling aerosols of contaminated dust, soil, or grass during landscaping activities. A WHO committee estimated in 1969 that dispersing 50 kg of aerosolized *F tularensis* over a metropolitan area with 5 million residents would lead to 19,000 deaths and 250,000 incapacitating casualties. [View Article](#)

US Latinos Have High Rates of Eye Disease and Visual Impairment

9 August – EurekAlert reported that Latinos living in the US have high rates of [eye disease](#) and visual impairment and a significant number may be unaware of their eye disease. Researchers found that Latinos had high rates of diabetic retinopathy and open-angle glaucoma. Investigators interviewed and gave clinical examinations to more than 6,300 Latinos, primarily Mexican-Americans, aged 40

and older. One in five individuals with diabetes was newly diagnosed during the clinic exam, and 25 percent of these individuals were found to have diabetic retinopathy. Among those with any signs of age-related macular degeneration (AMD), only 57 percent reported ever visiting an eye care practitioner. Seventy-five percent of Latinos with glaucoma and ocular hypertension (high pressure in the eye) were undiagnosed before participating in the study. Prevalence rates of visual impairment in Latinos are higher than those reported in Whites and comparable to those reported in Blacks. [View Article](#)

USDA Finding *Salmonella* Less Often In Meat

10 August - CIDRAP News reported that the general trend for [Salmonella](#) in meat and poultry samples tested by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) continues to head downward. The USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) collects and analyzes Salmonella samples at slaughter and grinding plants. Despite variations in individual categories, Salmonella frequencies in all classes of products have dropped to levels well below the estimated baseline prevalence before the HACCP system was launched in the late 1990s. Of 49,868 random regulatory samples collected in 2003, 3.8% tested positive for Salmonella, down from 4.29% in 2002. That drop continues a longer-term trend: 5.03% in 2001, 5.31% in 2000, 7.26% in 1999, and 10.65% in 1998. [View Article](#)

USPACOM

Bangladesh: Over 85,000 Cases of Diarrhea; Dengue Reported in Dhaka

5 August - The Center of Excellence DMHA reported that the threat of waterborne disease continues in flood-hit Bangladesh as cases of [diarrhea](#) rise daily. The flood situation is improving. The situation in Dhaka, which had also been two-thirds flooded, also continued to improve steadily. At least 10,000 people were affected by diarrhea nationwide in the past 24 hours, bringing the total number affected to 85,500. About 1,485 people have also been infected with [dengue](#) in Dhaka. Thousands of people have been infected with dysentery, pneumonia, skin disease and eye disease. [View Article](#)

Chinese Not Fully Knowledgeable About AIDS

9 August – VOA News reported that a newly published survey in China shows fewer than 9 percent of people are fully knowledgeable about [AIDS](#) transmission and prevention. The survey was conducted in late 2003 and shows that rural Chinese people know less than city dwellers about AIDS. About half of the respondents said they take preventive measures against AIDS, but fewer than 5 percent said they always use condoms when having sex. And only 19 percent expressed concern about needle-sharing. China says it has 840,000 HIV-AIDS patients, but the United Nations has warned the number could rise to 10 million by the end of the decade. [View Article](#)

Gastro Bug Strikes Hospital Staff

5 August – SMH.com.au reported that Sydney hospitals are continuing to struggle with an outbreak of [gastroenteritis](#), with more patients attending emergency departments and staff being forced to take sick leave. There have been at least 7553 cases of gastroenteritis since January, more than twice last year's total of 3570. Prince of Wales hospital has had two outbreaks of gastroenteritis - mainly the norovirus strain - since the end of June, often resulting in more staff than patients being affected.

Norovirus is a highly infectious gastrointestinal bug that causes nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Infection control experts have described this strain as particularly "ferocious." [View Article](#)

Nepal: Nearly 120 Die over the Past Week Due to Waterborne Diseases

5 August - The Center of Excellence DMHA reported that at least 56 people have been killed by [Japanese Encephalitis](#) (JE) over the past week. The viral disease is one of several mosquito-borne viruses that can affect the central nervous system, potentially causing death. The case fatality rate can be as high as 60% among those with disease symptoms; 30% of those who survive suffer from lasting damage to the central nervous system. At least 34 other people are being hospitalized because of the illness. Another 60 people have died from [diarrhea](#) caused by contaminated water. Some 35 districts were affected by [gastroenteritis](#), with the remote hill districts of central and west Nepal the hardest hit. The disease claims more than 600 lives each year in the country. Gastroenteritis epidemics normally spread from April to September in Nepal usually because of unsafe drinking water and an unhygienic environment. [View Article](#)

Philippines: Health Officials Declare Rabies Outbreak as 5 Die In Koronadal

6 August – MindaNews reported that health officials in Koronadal City in South Cotabato declared an outbreak of the [rabies](#) virus in the area. Based on monitoring by the city health office's rabies control unit since July 1, at least 26 persons have been found positive with rabies and five others have died. Dr. Raymundo Prieto, city health officer, said the 26 patients are still undergoing anti-rabies treatment through their office and the city veterinary office (CVO). To curb the further spread of the virus, he said the CVO has launched massive anti-rabies vaccination of dogs and cats at various barangays of the city. [View Article](#)

USSOUTHCOM

Brazil Plans 3 Billion Free Condoms for AIDS Fight

11 August – Yahoo! News reported that Brazil intends to distribute 3 billion free condoms every year, mainly to the poor and young, in a bid to prevent the spread of [AIDS](#). The plan to offer universal, free access to condoms builds on the country's renowned AIDS treatment program, which provides a cocktail of free drugs for patients with the human immunodeficiency virus, or HIV, which causes AIDS. Handing out free condoms has grown sharply in importance under the country's program to fight AIDS. It aims to increase distribution among schools in poor areas. The campaign has focused on handing out free condoms during Brazil's annual Carnival celebrations, when casual sex increases. Brazil's free drugs to patients have been achieved by winning price reductions from big drug firms, sometimes with the threat of making generic copies if companies did not agree to discounts. Brazil halved the number of AIDS-related deaths since 1996, when distribution of free drugs began. [View Article](#)

Please contact us to comment on or suggest improvements to this report. This report is also available on the [USACHPPM website](#).

Eileen Resta
eileen.resta@amedd.army.mil

Approved:
[Kevin Delaney](#)
Chief, Health Information Operations
(410) 436-5217 or DSN 584-5217