

USACHPPM
HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE

15 October 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.

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HOT TOPICS

Flu Vaccine

CDC, Aventis Pasteur Announce Allocation Plan for Influenza Vaccine

12 October - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Aventis Pasteur announced the plan to allocate [influenza vaccine](#) in response to the recently announced loss of half of the nation's expected flu vaccine supply for the 2004-2005 season. The plan calls for CDC to work closely with Aventis to distribute in phases 22.4 million doses of unshipped vaccine to identified areas of need throughout the country. About 14.2 million doses of vaccine will be allocated over the next 6-8 weeks directly to high-priority vaccine providers, including hospitals, long-term care facilities, nursing homes, and private providers who care for young children. CDC will continue to work with Aventis Pasteur and state and local health departments to identify people, by region, on the vaccination priority list. The approximately 8.2 million doses remaining after the first phase is completed will be shipped to other high-need areas. [View Press Release](#)

Chicken Soup Replaces Flu Vaccine

14 October – Yahoo! News reported that people who went to a local clinic in Fergus Falls, MN to get a [flu shot](#) didn't receive the vaccine they wanted. The estimated 20 people who went to the flu shot clinic were sent home with a can of chicken soup and a pack of tissues. The idea started out as a joke when the staff learned they had to cancel the clinic because of the nationwide shortage of flu vaccines. Nick Mariotti, the branch supervisor, bought a case of Campbell's chicken noodle soup and a bunch of tissues. He said the workers "kept them at the front desk, so when people walked in for the flu shot clinic, we could break the news lightly." When the vaccine seekers turned to leave without their flu shot, Mariotti pointed to the soup and said: "Maybe this will help." Most left with smiles on their faces, he said. [View Article](#)

Common Germ Contaminated Flu Shots

11 October – MSNBC reported that the reddish bacterium to blame for this year's shortage of [flu vaccine](#) has a colorful history. Until the 1960s, *Serratia marcescens* was considered harmless — so safe, in fact, that the military secretly dispersed it across U.S. cities in germ warfare studies. Today, *Serratia* is blamed for urinary tract infections, infected surgical wounds and pneumonia, usually spread among hospital patients. The germ that tainted the flu vaccine at a British factory is a common contaminant in labs — and lots of other places. *Serratia* is found in people's intestines, and possibly growing as pinkish scum in the shower, too. *Serratia* thrives in damp places, from bathroom walls to improperly sanitized medical equipment. It is partial to bread and other starchy foods, where it shows up as blood-colored splotches. [View Article](#)

Firm to Make 2 Million Flu Vaccine Doses

8 October – The Kansas City Star reported that the maker of FluMist, a relatively new nasal [flu vaccine](#), said it would nearly double the number of doses it makes to help meet demand caused by a shortage of flu shots. The inhaled vaccine is an option for people who do not fall into the high-risk groups who are targeted for the nation's limited supply of flu shots. FluMist must be given by a health care professional and is approved only for healthy people ages 5-49. FluMist will cost around \$30 per dose as compared to \$20 for a flu shot, although the cost for shots can vary widely. Some health insurance companies will cover FluMist during the upcoming flu season. [View Article](#)

Flu Shot Price Gouging Rampant

14 October - Around the country, officials say some vaccine suppliers are trying to cash in on the [flu shot](#) shortage by hiking up prices for hospitals and pharmacies. Federal prosecutors could use a variety of fraud, conspiracy and other charges to pursue individuals or companies thought to be engaging in price-gouging. Some states are taking their own action. Attorneys general in Kansas and Florida are suing Fort Lauderdale, Fla.-based Meds-Stat for allegedly trying to seek "unconscionable profits" by offering pharmacies flu shots for prices way above normal. When a flu shot leaves the factory, Aventis charges \$8.50 for it, and the company says it has not raised the price since Chiron's announcement. But prices easily can rise under the existing distribution system, which allows vaccines to travel from manufacturer to middleman before it reaches a hospital or doctor's office. A recent survey indicated that the price of the vaccine went up more than four times the original market value. In some cases, the survey showed, the vaccine is being offered at \$800 or more per 10-dose vial, which is more than 10 times the original value. As one remedy, the CDC and Aventis announced a plan to redistribute the company's remaining shots directly to pediatricians, nursing homes and other places that care for high-risk patients. [View Article](#)

Glaxo Seeks Entry into U.S. Flu Vaccine Market

11 October – Reuters reported that GlaxoSmithKline Plc is exploring ways to sell its Fluarix [flu vaccine](#) in the US, where supplies have run short this season after Chiron Corp lost a year's production to contamination. GSK was examining both short-term and long-term options with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. At the moment, GSK's product is sold in some 70 countries around the world -- but not in the US, since the company decided at the time of its launch in 1992 that the U.S. market was over-crowded. Today, however, the U.S. relies on just two companies to supply injectable flu vaccines and one of them will not be able to deliver this season. GSK said it was talking with FDA officials about the possibility of granting Fluarix speedy approval for sale in the U.S. this season -- although it is unlikely this will make a significant difference to the supply picture. The vast majority of

the company's flu vaccine is already committed to customers under long-term contract, leaving perhaps only around 200,000 doses available for shipment elsewhere. [View Article](#)

Roberts Urges Providers to Report High Flu Vaccine Charges

11 October – The Kansas City Star reported that [flu vaccine](#) costs tripled in a matter of hours last week for at least one Kansas distributor, prompting protests from federal and state officials. Sen. Pat Roberts, R-Kan., said providers called his office to complain of price spikes as soon as health officials announced there would be a shortage. "I was disturbed to hear from a Kansan seeking to provide the flu vaccine to residents of a nursing home that the distributor tripled the cost of the vaccine in a matter of a few hours," Roberts wrote in a letter to Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson. The senator has been urging providers to report suspected price gouging to federal and state officials. On Monday, State Attorney General Phill Kline said Roberts had contacted his office. "... Kansans can be assured that if and when allegations of price gouging are substantiated, we will act swiftly and aggressively to put an end to it," Kline said in a statement. Reports of price gouging have cropped up in several other states, too. [View Article](#)

Other Topics

Bandage Capable of Healing Wounds and Regenerating Tissue

12 October - News-Medical.net reported that Hapto-Biotech and Ortec International Inc. have developed a bandage capable of healing wounds and regenerating tissue, using a combination of peptides and collagen. The new technology could have an important impact on orthopedic and dental procedures, as well as the cosmetics industry. Hapto's core technology uses proprietary synthetic peptides that mimic the mechanism of cell attachment to fibrin. [View Article](#)

FDA: Chip Implant Can Be Used to Get Health Records

13 October – Reuters reported that a computer chip that is implanted under the skin won U.S. approval for use in helping doctors quickly access a patient's medical history. The VeriChip, sold by Applied Digital Solutions Inc., is placed in the upper arm in a painless procedure that takes minutes, the company said. About the size of a grain of rice, the chip contains a patient's identification number that corresponds to health information in a computer database. A handheld scanner can retrieve the patient's number from the chip, which emits radio waves when activated. Proponents hope doctors will use the technology to find vital information about someone who is unconscious or having trouble communicating. The database could include details such as medication use, allergies and major health problems. [View Article](#)

Mobile Phones Increase Tumor Risk, Study Says

14 October – Reuters reported that ten or more years of mobile phone use increases the risk of developing [acoustic neuroma](#), a benign tumor on the auditory nerve. The risk was confined to the side of the head where the phone was usually held and there were no indications of increased risk for those who have used their mobile for less than 10 years. "At the time when the study was conducted only analog mobile phones had been in use for more than 10 years and therefore we cannot determine if there results are confined to use of analog phones or if the results would be similar also after long-term use of digital (GSM) phones," the researchers said. The mobile phone market is now dominated by GSM phones, which replaced the bulkier and less advanced analog phones in many markets the mid- and late-1990s. [View Article](#)

Newer Polio Vaccine Ends Rare U.S. Cases - Report

12 October – Yahoo! News reported that the risk of [polio](#) vaccine causing the disease has been eliminated in the US because of a switch to a vaccine containing an inactive form of the virus. "The only threats from polio in the United States are from laboratories and the few remaining polio-endemic areas in Africa and Asia," said the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Introduced in 1961, polio vaccine has contained the paralyzing illness. But rare cases triggered by the vaccine have only recently been wiped out. An average of nine U.S. cases of poliomyelitis a year were blamed on the oral vaccine that contained weakened strains of the virus. But beginning in 1997, a gradual shift to an injectable vaccine that contains inactivated strains of the virus has eliminated vaccine-associated cases since 2000. [View Article](#)

One in 12 Children Worldwide Dies Before Age 5, According to U.N.

7 October - The Asia-Pacific Disease Outbreak/Surveillance Report stated that globally, poor care for newborns; malnutrition, malaria, diarrhea and measles kill the very young, according to a U.N. report. The United Nations Children's Fund reported alarmingly slow progress on reducing child deaths. One in 12 children worldwide does not live to age 5, with half of all deaths occurring in sub-Saharan Africa. In 2002, industrialized countries had seven deaths per 1,000 births, while the poorest nations had 158. In over a third of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa, child mortality rates have increased or stagnated. One in 10 Iraqi children under 5 died in 2002 (up from the 1990 rate of one in 20). One in six Afghan children died under five. Pakistan had 107 in 1,000, India 93 and Sri Lanka the fewest number in Asia with 19 per 1,000. Malnutrition contributed to more than half of the deaths, while acute respiratory infections and diarrhea accounted for one-third, and measles 5%. [View Article](#)
[View UNICEF Report](#)

Sleep Position May Contribute to Heart Problems

10 October – HealthDayNews reported that your sleeping position heighten your risk of heart problems. The risk of [heart disease](#) increases in people who experience high blood pressure or extreme dips in blood pressure during the night and in people whose blood pressure falls when they stand up suddenly. The researchers monitored blood pressure in 271 men with an average age of 50 who did not have cardiovascular disease and weren't taking medicine to control high blood pressure. The researchers first took measurements while the men were lying on their backs, then after they had rolled onto their stomachs. Average systolic blood pressure fell significantly from 130 millimeters of mercury (mmHg) to 125 mmHg in response to lying on the stomach. Twenty-five of the men (9.2 percent) experienced a more dramatic drop (more than a 15 mmHg) in systolic blood pressure. The researchers are urging more study into whether blood pressure changes in response to sleep position might be a possible cause of "cardiovascular events" during sleep. [View Article](#)

Surgeons 'Rebuild' Patient's Face

13 October – BBC News reported that surgeons have carried out what is believed to be the first full-face reconstruction using a single flap of skin. Skin from the burn patient's back was used. A 54-year old man was treated by the team at a Tokyo's hospital after sustaining severe burns from gasoline which affected his face, neck, chest and arms. Doctors "stretched" skin on the patient's back using a tissue expander - where a silicone balloon expander is inserted under the skin and filled with salt water, causing the skin to stretch and grow - for six months. Surgeons removed the scarred facial skin, removed the skin flap, measuring 28 by 27cm from the back, and transferred it to the face. It was large enough to cover the face completely. Uniquely, it had extra tissue to create a nose. The arteries and veins supplying the skin flap were connected to those of the neck and face. The team closed the

donor site on the back and, because the skin had been expanded, they were able to do so without having to take skin grafts from the leg to close the wound, eliminating huge scars that accompanied previous techniques. [View Article](#)

Topical Cidofovir Shows Promise in Treating Vaccinia-Infected Mice

11 October - CIDRAP News reported that the antiviral drug cidofovir is one of very few agents used to treat serious side effects of smallpox vaccination. In a recent study, a topical form of cidofovir worked better than an intravenous formulation to protect mice from the effects of [vaccinia](#), the smallpox vaccine virus. Mice infected with vaccinia were then treated with 1% cidofovir cream applied to the skin or with intravenous cidofovir. Control mice were treated with a placebo. All the mice died of spreading vaccinia infections, but those treated with either formulation of cidofovir survived significantly longer than the control mice. The topical drug was much more effective than the parenteral form in limiting the size and number of skin lesions, a finding that was explained by markedly lower levels of virus in the lesions in mice treated with the cream. Mice that received the combined treatment survived a mean of 28.3 days, compared with 19.8 days for the topical treatment alone and 21.4 days for the IV treatment alone. [View Article](#)

'Weekend Warriors' Better Off Than Couch Potatoes

8 October - Reuters Health reported that cramming the recommended weekly amount of exercise into the weekend appears to offer some health benefits for otherwise healthy men. Experts urge people to get at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days of the week, or a smaller amount of high-intensity exercise at least three times per week, to burn a total of 1,000 or more extra calories per week. However, time constraints can make it difficult for many Americans to put aside part of most days to work out. Now, researchers report that healthy men who burned off at least 1,000 calories during one or two weekly bursts of activity were 60 percent less likely to die over a 10-year period than sedentary men, who expended less than 500 extra calories per week. However, men who had at least one significant health concern at the outset of the study - such as smokers, overweight men, and those with high blood pressure - were no less likely to die than sedentary men, suggesting their weekend bursts of activity did not protect their health. [View Article](#)

Focus on Epidemiology

Smoking During Pregnancy --- United States, 1990--2002

8 October – MMWR reported that cigarette [smoking during pregnancy](#) adversely affects the health of both mother and child. The risk for adverse maternal conditions (e.g., premature rupture of membranes, abruptio placentae, and placenta previa) and poor pregnancy outcomes (e.g., neonatal mortality and stillbirth, preterm delivery, and sudden infant death syndrome) is increased by maternal smoking. Infants born to mothers who smoke weigh less than other infants, and low birth weight (<2,500 grams) is a key predictor for infant mortality. Infertility and conception delay also might be elevated by smoking. CDC analyzed state-specific trends in maternal smoking during 1990--2002 by using data collected on birth certificates. Although participating areas observed a significant decline in maternal smoking during the surveillance period, 10 states reported recent increases in smoking by pregnant teens. Data for the analyses were collected on birth certificates and reported by 49 reporting states (not including California), the District of Columbia (DC), and New York City (NYC). In 2002, smoking during pregnancy was reported by 11.4% of all women giving birth in the United States, a decrease of 38% from 1990, when 18.4% reported smoking. From 1990 to 2002, all 44 states (and

DC) with comparable data for the entire observation period reported significant declines in maternal smoking. However, the declines were variable, ranging from 5.8% in West Virginia (from 27.8% in 1990 to 26.2% in 2002) to 68.0% in Massachusetts (from 25.3% in 1990 to 8.1% in 2002). Since 1990, maternal smoking for females aged 15--19 years has fluctuated. Every year from 1996 through 2001, these mothers had the highest percentage of smoking during pregnancy than any other age group. However, in 2002, the percentage of maternal smokers aged 15--19 years (16.7%) was the same as that for women aged 20--24 years, with the highest percentage observed among women aged 18--19 years (18.2%). [View Study](#)

DoD-GEIS: West Nile Virus

14 October - CDC reports [West Nile virus](#) activity this year in all states except for Alaska, Hawaii and Washington. Puerto Rico has had no reported human cases but has reported animal cases this year. For WNV in humans a total of 1951 US cases with 62 deaths have been reported. Of these, 720 were classified as neuroinvasive and 791 as West Nile Fever. Case counts for states with the highest numbers of cases are California (583), Arizona (375), Colorado (225), Texas (95), New Mexico (78) and Louisiana (70). A total of 184 presumptively viremic blood donors (PVD) have been reported this year to CDC's ArboNET surveillance program. New information about WNV activity in Mexico is available in Spanish at the [Secretariat of Health WNV website](#). Canada reports 21 human cases with no deaths as of September. Additional information about national surveillance of WNV activity, including useful links to clinical, laboratory and other guidance is available from [CDC](#) and a [US Geological Survey site](#). 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 Influenza (avian and human), Leishmaniasis and severe respiratory syndromes, including SARS, is available on the [DoD-GEIS website](#); for information on ongoing investigations, see the [DOD-GEIS secure site](#).*

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

Sudan: New Polio Cases Prompt Enhanced Immunization Campaign

13 October (IRIN) – Reuters Foundation reported that eleven confirmed cases of [polio](#) were reported in Sudan this year. Most of the cases were genetically linked to the polio virus endemic in northern Nigeria. Sudan had been polio-free since April 2001, but cross-border movement between Chad and Sudan is believed to have re-introduced the virus. The conflict in the western region of Darfur, where the first of the 11 cases was noticed, prevented the immunization of all children under the age of five. "Armed conflict has contributed to the re-infection by the wild polio virus in Darfur that has now spread to the capital city, Khartoum," the WHO representative in Sudan, Guido Sabatinelli, said. Epidemiologists of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative warned in June that an outbreak of the disease in West Africa was a threat and could spread to other countries if not checked. [View Article](#)

USEUCOM

Call for Calm after Factory Disease Outbreak

7 October – The Bromsgrove Standard reported that more than 70 workers at a Longbridge factory have been struck down with lung diseases with more cases expected to be confirmed. The 73 workers at the Powertrain plant - a sister company of MG Rover - have been diagnosed with [alveolitis](#) and [occupational asthma](#). The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is investigating the outbreak which began in March this year when five cases of occupational lung disease were diagnosed. The exact cause of the diseases is not known but experience elsewhere shows that both complaints can be caused by breathing in microbes present in the mist or vapor given off when metalworking machines are operating. Most people affected were still able to work and those at risk were told to wear facemasks while at work. [View Article](#)

Mumps Outbreak Hits Fettes College

9 October – The Daily Record reported that about 40 pupils at Edinburgh's Fettes College have been struck down by [mumps](#). Some of the pupils who have been taken ill have been sent home while others have had to be quarantined in the school's medical center. Sports fixtures at the world-renowned school have had to be cancelled until after the half-term break. Headteacher Michael Spens said: "Once we had one or two cases, we realized there were going to be more but it seems to be slowing down now." The number of reported cases of mumps this year in Scotland was 1973 - compared with just 114 by the same time last year. [View Article](#)

Russia: Hepatitis A Outbreak in Buryatiya

7 October – ProMED reported that the number of cases of [hepatitis A](#) virus infection in the Republic of Buryatiya has risen to 100. An emergency situation has been declared in the Barguzinskiy region of Buryatiya which appears to be the focus of the outbreak. All schools, kindergartens, and nurseries have been closed. The regional health administration has established a special unit to tackle the emergency, but as yet the spread of infection, which appears to be by personal contact, has not yet been contained. Fifty-four children are currently in hospital with hepatitis A. The source of the epidemic has not been established. [View Article](#)

Superbug Closes Cancer Ward

10 October – The Belfast Telegraph reported that a cancer ward at Belfast City Hospital had to be shut down for six days, following an outbreak of viral [gastroenteritis](#) and a rise in [MRSA](#) cases. The City's new 'rapid response' cleaning team was sent to decontaminate the area, following the outbreak. The 'rapid response' team is one of a number of new measures introduced in the war against MRSA at the City, which also includes the banning of flowers from wards. Dr. Ken Fullerton, medical director at the City Hospital, said that "Among the new measures introduced is a continuous audit of best practice for staff in hand washing, and the use of antibacterial gels located throughout the hospital. Dr. Fullerton added: "Staff treating patients wear disposable aprons over uniforms, and these are changed between each patient contact. [View Article](#)

UK *Salmonella* Outbreak Linked to Lettuce

12 October - CIDRAP News reported that lettuce has been implicated in an outbreak of [Salmonella](#) infection that has involved more than 350 cases in England, Northern Ireland, and Scotland. The United Kingdom's Health Protection Agency (HPA) has confirmed 368 cases of *Salmonella enterica* serotype Newport infections in England and Northern Ireland. Another 14 cases were confirmed in Scotland. Case-control studies in Lincolnshire and Northern Ireland linked the infections with the consumption of lettuce. Food histories collected in England, the Isle of Man, and Northern Ireland pointed to fast-food and takeout restaurants as the source of contamination. Thirty-three people were hospitalized. [View Article](#)

Warnings of London TB Outbreak

7 October – This is London reported that fresh fears of a [tuberculosis](#) outbreak in London emerged today as the Government launched a new campaign to try to eradicate the disease. Chief Medical Officer Sir Liam Donaldson warned that London was particularly at risk from the potentially fatal disease. "Two out of five cases in Britain come from London, and in some boroughs the number of infections are as high as in a developing country," he said. "We need to utilize new technology such as mobile x-ray machines and genetically fingerprinting the disease to cut the number of infections," he said. The x-ray machines will be used to monitor high-risk patients such as recent arrivals from abroad, prisoners and the homeless. Department of Health research found that seven out of 10 carriers of TB were from an ethnic minority group and two-thirds were born abroad. [View Article](#)

USNORTHCOM

Bill Would Let Asthmatic School Kids Carry, Use Inhalers

12 October – Health Day News reported that schoolchildren with [asthma](#) would be allowed to carry and use their own inhalers under a bill passed by Congress and sent to President Bush for his signature. The bill, approved by the Senate urges states to pass "right-to-carry" legislation. It also directs the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services to give preferences to states with such laws when he awards grants for asthma-related programs. One of the bill's sponsors, Rep. Cliff Stearns, R-FL, said the zero-tolerance drug movement had "the unintended consequence of depriving students of immediate access to their prescribed medication." Many states require students to keep inhalers and other medication either with their teachers or at the nurse's office. [View Article](#)

CDC: Chronic Kidney Failure Cases Double

7 October – ABC News reported that chronic [kidney failure](#) more than doubled in the United States in the 1990s - another sign of the toll being taken by America's obesity epidemic. Between 1990 and 2001, cases of chronic kidney failure rose from 697 to 1,424 per 1 million population, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Obesity can lead to diabetes and high blood pressure, and both of those conditions can cause chronic kidney failure. Diabetes-related chronic kidney failure increased 194 percent, from 171 to 503 cases per million, and hypertension-related cases doubled from 166 to 331 cases per million during the same period, the CDC said. Other possible reasons cited by the agency for the rise include an aging population, and medical advances such as dialysis that are keeping more people with the condition alive longer. Washington, D.C., Louisiana and Mississippi had the highest rates of chronic kidney failure. [View Article](#)

Cleveland Ranked Tops in Hospital Care

12 October – HealthDayNews reported that Cleveland was the top-ranked metropolitan area in the country for quality hospital care. Hospitals in Detroit, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Phoenix, and Tampa, Fla., rounded out the top five best cities for hospital quality, according to 2003 data collected by HealthGrades Inc. Significant gains were also made nationwide in terms of the diagnosis and treatment of heart disease, the nation's number one killer. Since 2000, patients at U.S. hospitals now have a 17 percent better chance of surviving a heart attack; a 21 percent better chance of surviving coronary bypass; a 19 percent better chance of surviving angioplasty; and a 20 percent better chance of surviving congestive heart failure. "Despite that significant improvement, however, there's still a big variation in quality from metropolitan area to area, and from hospital to hospital," said Dr. Samantha Collier, vice president for medical affairs at HealthGrades, a for-profit clearinghouse for health-care data used by government, industry, and others. HealthGrades sifts through Medicare data on millions of patients aged 65 and older treated at thousands of institutions across the country, to come up with its annual list. [View Article](#) [View Report](#)

Metabolic Syndrome on the Rise in U.S. Adults

8 October – Reuters Health reported that the prevalence of the [metabolic syndrome](#) is increasing among U.S. adults, and will likely lead to increases in diabetes and heart disease. The metabolic syndrome is a cluster of conditions, including high levels of blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol, and abdominal obesity, which together greatly increase the risk of cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes. Subjects who met at least three of the following criteria were defined as having the metabolic syndrome: abdominal obesity, elevated triglycerides, low high-density cholesterol (the "good" cholesterol), high blood pressure and high fasting blood sugar levels. The team observed an increase in the prevalence of the metabolic syndrome of 23.5 percent in women and 2.2 percent in men. The increase in the prevalence of the metabolic syndrome, especially among women, was mainly accounted for by increases in high blood pressure, waist circumference, and high triglyceride levels. [View Article](#)

More Troops Returning From Iraq with Brain Trauma

6 October - ABC News reported that more than 350 veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan now being treated for [traumatic brain injury](#) at a handful of VA facilities. But as wounded veterans return, the need for more beds is enormous. Traumatic brain injury is sometimes called "the invisible handicap." Symptoms include irritability, poor memory, lack of inhibition, anxiety, confusion, unusual fatigue and persistent headaches. These problems are often dismissed as postwar stress reactions. While an estimated 20 percent of injured veterans in past wars suffered from TBI, doctors say more than 60 percent of injured troops returning from Iraq may be afflicted. The reason: Troops have new body armor that saves lives by protecting the torso, but not the brain. [View Article](#)

Outbreak of Legionnaires' Disease in North Carolina Investigated

12 October - Citizen-Times.com reported that state public health officials are working with the Cherokee County Public Health Department to investigate an outbreak of a bacterial infection commonly known as [Legionnaires' disease](#) at Murphy Medical Center that has killed two people. There have been four confirmed cases of Legionellosis and two suspected cases in the county this year, according to Cherokee County Health Director Elaine Russell. Three confirmed cases occurred in September and one in October. Three of the four confirmed cases were associated with Murphy Medical Center's long-term care facility. Two of the four cases resulted in death. State public health

workers, as well as a team from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are on site to assist with the investigation. [View Article](#)

Poor Performance on Treadmill Can Mean Double Risk for Heart Attack

27 September – News-Medical.net reported that among men without [heart disease](#) but who have significant cardiac risk factors, a poor performance on an exercise treadmill test is associated with more than doubling of the risk for a heart attack or other coronary heart disease event. "Our results suggest that exercise testing may be of benefit in asymptomatic men with intermediate to high risk," said Gary J. Balady, M.D., a professor of medicine at Boston University School of Medicine. He and colleagues found that a change in electrocardiogram (ECG) tracing called ST-segment depression or failure to reach target heart rate during exercise testing more than doubled the 10-year risk of coronary event in men, compared to those who did not have these findings on the stress test. [View Article](#)

Soccer Greatly Improves the Health Profile of Growing Boys

12 October – News-Medical.net reported that regular and long-term participation in soccer greatly improves the health profile of growing boys. The study shows sharp contrasts between the greater benefits achieved through routine, extracurricular sports participation and those afforded most school children through physical education alone. Researchers recruited a large group of prepubertal Spanish boys for the study and followed them for more than three years. Those who regularly played soccer for at least three hours a week were separated from those who only engaged in regular in-school physical education of two, 45-minute sessions per week. The soccer players showed more positive increases in anaerobic capacity (7 percent more), total lean body mass (6 percent more), and total bone mineral density (more than 33 percent more) than the control group. Conversely, those in the less active group had significantly increased their percentage of body fat by the end of the study period. [View Article](#)

Summit Hopes to Combat Cancer among American Indians

11 October – Health Day News reported that American Indians diagnosed with [cancer](#) have a lower five-year survival rate than any other group of people in the United States. "Part of it is due to lack of information, lack of access to high levels of health care, less access to treatment and under-funding of the Indian health system," said Dr. Jeff Henderson, president and CEO of the Black Hills Center for American Indian Health in Rapid City. Cancer is the third-leading cause of deaths for Native Americans, behind unintentional death and heart disease, according to the CDC. [View Article](#)

USPACOM

200 Million Chinese Overweight, Obesity Expected to Rise Sharply

13 October – People's Daily Online reported that the [overweight and obesity](#) rates of Chinese adults have reached 22.8 percent and 7.1 percent. It is estimated that the number of Chinese who suffer from overweight and obesity totals 200 million and 60 million respectively. In urban areas, the adult overweight and obesity rates are 30.0 percent and 12.3 percent and the child obesity rate has grown to 8.1 percent. The diet and nutrition of China's urban and rural residents have been clearly improved over the past decade; as a result, incidence of diseases has decreased. At the same time, however,

the rates of high blood pressure, diabetes and obesity have been rising. The Chinese are now facing double challenges from a lack of nutrition and imbalanced trophic structure. [View Article](#)

4,000,000 People Affected by Hepatitis C in Bangladesh

8 October – The Asia-Pacific Disease Outbreak/Surveillance Report stated that about 4 million people or 3 percent of the total population of Bangladesh are suffering from the [hepatitis C](#) virus (HCV) according to a preliminary report by the World Health Organization (WHO). More than 170 million people across the world are suffering from HCV, of which 30 million are in India, 14 million in Egypt and 11 million in Pakistan. Approximately 25 percent of intravenous drug users and 1.2 percent of blood donors suffer from HCV. People are much more aware of Hepatitis-B than of HCV, which is why they do not take necessary precautions to prevent its spread. [View Article](#)

A War and a Mystery: Confronting Avian Flu

12 October – The New York Times has published an article on avian influenza that discusses history, cultural issues, virulence, and vaccine information associated with the disease. [View Article](#) (registration required)

Avian Flu Task Force Formed, Disease Returns to Indonesia

9 October - CIDRAP News reported that Southeast Asian nations have agreed to coordinate response to the deadly [avian influenza](#) outbreak that has caused 31 human deaths and widespread poultry losses. Avian influenza has returned to Indonesia, where hundreds of chickens were killed last week but an Indonesian official announced that the flu strain responsible for poultry deaths there couldn't be spread to humans. The WHO's Steven Bjorge said that Indonesia's virus differs somewhat from the virus in Vietnam and Thailand, but it is still part of the same Z genotype that has caused deaths in the latter countries. [View Article](#)

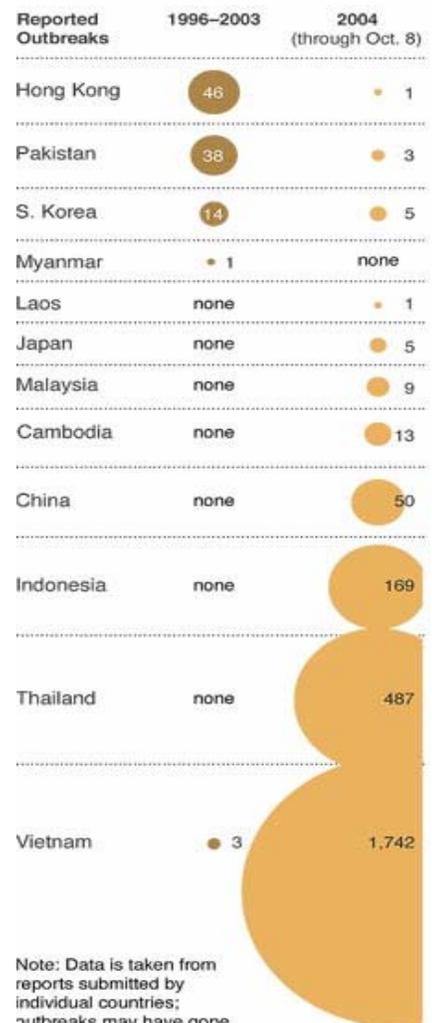
Superbug Outbreak at Hospital

7 October – The Herald Sun reported that the Royal Perth Hospital is battling to contain an outbreak of a potentially deadly superbug. Twelve of its patients had tested positive to the bacterium [vancomycin resistant enterococci](#) (VRE), which could be life threatening to patients with low immunity. The patients were carrying the organism in their bowels, but it was not causing an infection. The hospital's head of microbiology and infectious diseases Keryn Christiansen said, "The reason that we worry about patients that are colonized is that they can pass the organism on to someone who is vulnerable, someone who maybe have just had recent surgery or is immunocompromised in some way and they then subsequently get an infection," she said. "If someone gets an infection with the organism, we have a great deal of difficulty treating it because we have very few antibiotics to treat it with. She hoped the hospital would be free of VRE by the end of next week, she said. [View Article](#)



Bird Flu In Asia

Avian influenza outbreaks among farm birds in Asia are rising rapidly.



Note: Data is taken from reports submitted by individual countries; outbreaks may have gone unreported in some cases.

Source: World Organisation for Animal Health (O. I. E.)

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Epidemiological Situation of Hantavirus in Brazil

6 October – The Pan Health American Organization reported that up to 5 September 2004, 85 new cases of [hantavirus](#) were confirmed in Brazil as Hantavirus Cardiopulmonary Syndrome (HCPS). The number of cases reported to date for this year is equivalent to the total number of cases reported for 2003. These 85 cases were detected in 10 (37%) of the Brazilian states, with only the northeastern region not registering cases. Nearly 60% of the cases were detected in Minas Gerais and the Federal District. The geographical spread of the disease is limited to 45 areas or municipalities of transmission, or 0.8% of the total number of Brazilian municipalities. [View Article](#)

Jungle Yellow Fever (JYF) in the State of Monagas, Venezuela

5 October- The Pan Health American Organization reported that the Ministry of Health and Social Development (MSDS) of Venezuela reported three new cases of [Jungle Yellow Fever](#), with two deaths. All three cases were identified in the northeastern State of Monagas in the municipalities of Bolivar (with two cases) and Maturín (with one). For this year, the total number of reported cases in Venezuela so far is five, with two cases previously reported in the State of Mérida. The MSDS intensified vaccination efforts in this area. Between 1998 and 2004, vaccine coverage for Bolívar was 65% and for Maturín is 50.3%. Between 2002 and 2004, Venezuela has vaccinated approximately 1.9 million people in areas considered to be enzootic. The country's goal for 2006 is to have vaccinated seven million people residing in high-risk cities and towns. [View Article](#)

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