

**USACHPPM**  
**HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE**  
 29 October 2004

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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**

**Canadian Lab Studying Dangerous Avian Flu Viruses**

25 October – Canada.com reported that scientists in Winnipeg are toiling over the H5 and H7 [avian influenza](#) strains, considered the biggest threats to cause the next flu pandemic. Canada's National Microbiology Laboratory's Dr. Frank Plummer says there's another imperative driving the research - making the precursor of a human vaccine, known as a viral seed, for an H7 virus. "The other major reason for doing it is building Canadian scientific capacity in this area so that we can respond better to the emergence of a pandemic flu," Plummer said in an interview from Winnipeg. A top priority for the Winnipeg team is using viral samples collected during last spring's devastating H7N3 avian influenza outbreak in B.C.'s Lower Mainland to produce a precursor vaccine. H7 is one of two influenza subtypes - H5 is the other - for which it is particularly difficult to develop vaccines because they kill chicken embryos and flu vaccines are grown in fertilized chicken eggs. [View Article](#)

**Drinking Tea Might Delay Alzheimer's Disease**

26 October – Reuters UK reported that both black and green tea inhibited the activity of enzymes associated with the development of [Alzheimer's disease](#). The teas inhibited the activity of acetylcholinesterase -- the same mechanism of action used by drugs such as Novartis' Exelon and Pfizer's Aricept. The teas also hindered the activity of the butyrylcholinesterase, which has been found in senile plaques in the brains of Alzheimer's disease patients. Green tea obstructed the activity of beta-secretase, which also plays a role in the production of senile plaques. [View Article](#)

**Gene May Account for Range of Ills**

22 October - Reuters UK reported that a rare genetic mutation may help explain why some people are prone to diabetes, heart disease and obesity: the [metabolic syndrome](#). The mutation is seen in one

gene found in mitochondrial DNA -- handed down virtually unchanged from mother to child. Mitochondrial DNA affects basic cell functions. It could also help explain why people are more prone to heart disease as they age -- because mitochondria work less efficiently as people get older. [View Article](#)

## Military Told To Stop Mandatory Anthrax Shots

28 October – Indy Star.com reported that for the second time in a year, a federal judge ordered the military to stop requiring [anthrax vaccines](#) for U.S. military personnel. In response, the Pentagon halted mandatory anthrax vaccinations "until further notice." U.S. District Judge Emmet G. Sullivan said the Food and Drug Administration violated its procedures when it gave final approval to the vaccine last year because it failed to give the public an adequate opportunity to comment. "The men and women of our armed forces deserve the assurance that the vaccines our government compels them to take . . . have been tested by the greatest scrutiny of all -- public scrutiny," Sullivan said. Six unidentified service members had sued the Pentagon, arguing that the vaccine is experimental. [View Article](#)

## New TB Vaccine Promising in Early Clinical Trials

25 October - Reuters Health reported that the results of the first early test of a new type of [tuberculosis](#) vaccine show that it elicits strong immune responses in adults with or without a previous bacille Calmette-Guerin (BCG) vaccination. Dr. Helen McShane, from the Center for Clinical Vaccinology and Tropical Medicine at the University of Oxford in the UK, and colleagues found that the vaccine (MVA85A) induced "high levels" of TB-specific immune cells when given to healthy adults who have never had a BCG vaccination. "When we give MVA85A to people who have previously received BCG, the immune responses are stronger and last for at least 6 months after vaccination," McShane said. "The next step is to see whether this improved immune response actually protects against disease," she added. A booster MVA85A vaccination could prolong TB immunity in areas of the world where the disease is endemic. [View Article](#)

## Northern Hemisphere: Risk of A/Wellington/1/2004(H3N2)-Like Virus

24 October – ProMED reported that a new strain of [influenza](#) may diminish the effectiveness of today's vaccine. The emergent strain, A/Wellington, is named after the New Zealand city where it was first detected. "The flu season has been late this year, and it seems some people who have been vaccinated have been hit by this changing strain," said the New Zealand Health Ministry flu chief. Epidemiologists for the World Health Organization track the ever-evolving strains of influenza. The predominant flu virus around the globe right now is one called A/Fujian, and the vaccine Americans are seeking today is a perfect match for it. But, A/Wellington is gaining ground. Tests suggest that 43 percent of recent New Zealand flu cases spring from the new strain, or variants of it. A/Wellington has even turned up about as far from the South Pacific as is geographically possible: in Norway. The late season surge of A/Wellington was so worrying that the WHO recommended that next year's flu vaccine for the Southern Hemisphere be reformulated to protect against it. Despite the late emergence of the new flu strain, influenza was unusually mild throughout the Southern Hemisphere from May through October 2004. [View Article](#)

## Study Gives Pill Good Bill Of Health

22 October – The Australian reported that the Pill does not increase the risk of breast cancer, and can reduce the risk of ovarian cancer and heart disease. The largest study of the [oral contraceptive](#), a US study of more than 160,000 women, contradicts previous research. The \$US 625 million study found

an 8 per cent lower risk of heart disease among the 67,000 women in the survey who had taken the Pill. Women who used the Pill for more than four years also had a 42 per cent lower risk of ovarian cancer and a 30 per cent lower risk of developing uterine cancer. "This is great news because it's a large, randomized, controlled trial, so it's the gold standard of research," said Elizabeth Farrell, consultant gynecologist and director of the Jean Hailes Foundation, a leading women's research organization in Melbourne. [View Article](#)

## Trans Fat is Linked to Weak Intellect

26 October - The Baltimore Sun reported that consuming too much of several kinds of fat can damage memory and intellect. Many recent studies have linked trans fat to heart disease and cancer, but this is the first to connect it to problems with learning and memory. Over the past two decades, trans fat has become ubiquitous in this country. It's used in many crackers, cookies, doughnuts, cakes and breads, as well as many fast foods. It is not clear whether the damage is reversible. A follow-up study is planned to see whether the impairment decreases once the trans fat diet is discontinued. [View Article](#)

## Volcano Monitoring Funds Low

26 October – Yahoo! News reported that for lack of funds, more than a third of the nation's dangerous volcanos lack even a seismometer for detecting signs of an impending eruption. Mount St. Helens, where lava began oozing into the crater this month after a few steam bursts, is one of the dozens of volcanos monitored by the U.S. Geological Survey in Alaska, Washington, Oregon and California. Even at St. Helens, the most active volcano in the lower 48 states over the past 4,500 years and the most thoroughly wired mountain in the Cascade Range, scientists have scrambled to install equipment, recharge batteries and repair damaged gear. "We think it's serious," said Jim Quick, director of the USGS (news - web sites) volcano hazards program in Reston, Va., told The Columbian of Vancouver. "The problem is you're playing catch-up on the volcano then," Quick said. "You've greatly shortened the response time the community has to react." Rep. Brian Baird (news, bio, voting record), D-Wash., whose district includes St. Helens, says the payoff in public safety would be well worth the cost. [View Article](#)

# Focus on Epidemiology

## Controlling an Import-Associated Measles Outbreak --- Iowa, 2004

On March 12, 2004, a college student infectious with [measles](#) returned to Iowa from India by a commercial airliner; the case was subsequently linked to two other measles cases. The effective uses of quarantine and isolation during the outbreak underscore the utility of these public health tools in halting communicable disease transmission. Immediately after being notified of the measles case, the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) and local health departments in Iowa began using media releases, passenger lists, and interviews with the infected student to identify and contact persons potentially exposed to measles. Susceptible contacts were offered postexposure prophylaxis (PEP), either measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccination within 72 hours of exposure or immune globulin (IG) within 6 days of exposure. Approximately 10 days later, measles cases were identified in two other Iowa residents. Contacts of these two patients also were identified and offered PEP if they were deemed susceptible to measles infection. In public health immunization clinics, approximately 175 persons received postexposure MMR vaccination, and 20 received postexposure IG. All three patients, who were moderately ill, were placed in voluntary isolation. [View Article](#)

## DoD-GEIS: Influenza

[Influenza](#) activity remains at a low level within the US at calendar week 41 (week ending October 16), according to [DoD](#) and [CDC](#) influenza surveillance systems. Activity in Canada is also low (characterized as local or sporadic), although media coverage has focused on two nursing homes where outbreaks have occurred. CDC laboratory surveillance has isolated 2 influenza viruses this season; both were H3N2; the one specimen already antigenically characterized was A/Fujian/411/2002-like. Canada reports 8 isolates so far this season; 7 A/Fujian/411/02(H3N2)-like and one B/ Shanghai /361/02. A/Fujian strain protection is included in this season's US vaccine (commonly, influenza vaccine includes two A and one B component strains, or antigens) and circulated in the US last season. Last season's vaccine did not include this strain. Recipients of last season's vaccine who are unable to receive the vaccine this season are expected to have at least some cross-protection as the Fujian variant is closely related to A/Panama/2007/99 that was included in last year's vaccine. DoD had expected 3.7 million doses of vaccine this season, including 2.4 million from Chiron, which are unavailable because of contamination, and 1.3 million from Aventis Pasteur. To compensate partially for the lack of Chiron vaccine, the [Assistant Secretary of Defense \(HA\)](#) announced the ordering of 550,000 additional doses from Aventis Pasteur and 250,000 doses of the FluMist vaccine from MedImmune. This week, the ASD(HA) also released [final policy guidance](#) for influenza vaccination. Priority groups for vaccination are critical operational forces, beneficiaries at high risk as defined by CDC, and trainee populations. Beneficiaries who do not belong to one of these priority groups are not to be vaccinated. Vaccination of critical forces and high-risk (for high-risk groups please refer to DoD/CDC guidance) proceeds in parallel within DoD.

*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](#).*

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### **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

### Iraq: Large Numbers of Rabies Cases Reported In Several Governorates

A number of [rabies](#) (hydrophobia) cases have been reported in some Iraqi Governorates, especially in Anbar, west of Baghdad. "There are a lot of rabies infections in Iraqi cities, and more than 60 cases have been recorded in the western Governorate of Anbar, especially among children," Dr. Imad Al Deen Al Naqash, Director of Health Monitoring in the Iraqi Ministry of Health said. He said the spread of the disease was due to the shortage of vaccine, the shortage of necessary treatments, the abundance of stray dogs, and a low level of awareness among citizens. Al Naqash stated that the Ministry has implemented a campaign of vaccinating children in Fallujah, Ramadi, and in 2 districts of Anbar. More than 145,000 children will be vaccinated despite the ongoing military operations in these areas. [View Article](#)

### More Than 60 Hospitalized With Typhoid in South Kyrgyzstan

22 October – ProMED reported that more than 60 people have been hospitalized in southern Kyrgyzstan with suspected [typhoid](#) over the past 3 weeks. Tynybek Jorobaev, director of the

provincial sanitary and epidemiological control center said the people had been hospitalized in the village of Burgandy in the Nookan district of the southern Jalal-Abad province. "The diagnosis has been confirmed in almost 40 cases, and 70 percent of the infected patients are schoolchildren," he said. The number of typhoid cases nationwide was almost 5 times as high as in 2003, reaching 255. Local experts blame the consumption of contaminated water and contacts with carriers of the disease as the root causes of the spread of the infection. Only 20 percent of Burgandy's population of 14,000 people has access to safe drinking water. [View Article](#)

## USEUCOM

### Belgium Raises Bird Flu Alert

24 October - News24.com reported that Belgian authorities appealed to a Thai man who smuggled two [bird flu](#)-infected Asian eagles into Brussels airport to make contact, and urged passengers who took the same flights to seek medical help. Anxious to prevent a European outbreak of the deadly virus, the public health ministry said it was trying to find the Thai man following confirmation that the two Mountain Hawk Eagles were infected with avian influenza. The bird flu virus has hit six Asian nations killing at least 30 people so far. The man was apprehended by Belgian customs officers when the eagles were discovered in his bags, live and wrapped up in plastic tubing. But he was released. The eagles never left the airport environs. But the Thai man himself could be at risk, they warn. Customs officers and scientists who came into contact with the birds of prey are being given preventive anti-viral treatment. [View Article](#)

### Britons Want National Smoking Ban - Poll

25 October – Reuters reported that sixty-six percent of Britons want to see [smoking](#) banned in restaurants, pubs and offices. Sixty-one percent of those questioned said the government was justified in regulating "for the benefit of others" the country's drinking, smoking and gambling habits. Thirty-five percent said they opposed such government interference. In March, Ireland became the first country to ban smoking in restaurants and pubs. Since then several countries, including Norway and Malta, have instituted similar bans. The poll also showed 57 percent of people support the government's plans to allow pubs and clubs more flexible closing times. [View Article](#)

### EU Anti-Smoking Campaign Gets Graphic

23 October – ABC News International reported that the European Union unveiled a new [anti-smoking](#) campaign that calls on governments to put both horrific and humorous pictures on cigarette packs to deter people from smoking. Among the 42 pictures is one grisly photo of a man with a cancerous growth on his neck. But most make only indirect allusions to the dangers of smoking, like a picture of a drooping cigarette meant to illustrate how smoking can cause impotence. "People need to be shocked out of their complacency about tobacco," EU Health Commissioner David Byrne said. The EU head office wants EU governments to require cigarette makers to display the photos on their products, hoping the images will have more force than written warnings now on packs of cigarettes, including "smoking kills" or "smoking can lead to a slow and painful death." Tobacco is the single largest cause of avoidable death in the 25-nation EU. The Commission said it accounts for over 650,000 deaths a year, or 15 percent of all deaths and 25 percent of all cancer deaths. [View Article](#)

## Low Influenza Activity in Europe

17 October – European Influenza Surveillance Scheme reported that the intensity of [influenza](#) activity is low in Europe. Increasing activity is reported in Slovakia, but the incidence of influenza like illness is still at baseline levels. Four confirmed cases of influenza A in the Czech Republic, England, France and Germany have been reported this week. [View Article](#)

## Mali Says Locust Outbreak Subsides, Eases Food Fears

23 October – Reuters reported that Mali's government could supply enough food for villagers who watched locusts devour their harvests and that the threat posed by the insects had largely subsided. Aid workers are beginning to assess the damage caused by the worst desert locust infestation for more than a decade in West and Central Africa. The government estimates locusts have consumed about 441,000 tons of cereals. Mali, Niger, Senegal and Mauritania and Chad have suffered in this year's latest locust plague, prompting warnings from aid workers that they will need large amounts of food aid. [View Article](#)

## Russian Duma Ratifies Kyoto Protocol

22 October 2004 – Voice of America reported that Russia's lower house of parliament ratified the Kyoto Protocol on global warming. The action by the State Duma means that the long-delayed treaty may soon come into force despite opposition from major countries, including the United States and Australia. Duma deputies voted overwhelmingly to adopt the Kyoto Protocol just a few weeks after Russian President Vladimir Putin announced he backed the long-delayed treaty aimed at easing the problem of global warming. Named for a conference in Kyoto, Japan, where it was drafted more than a decade ago, the document seeks to roll back greenhouse gas emissions to below levels in 1990. With Russia's ratification, the Kyoto protocol would secure the backing of countries accounting for at least 55 percent of 1990 global level emissions, and allow the pact to go into force. [View Article](#)

## Senegal: Cholera Breaks Out in Dakar

26 October– AllAfrica.com reported that [cholera](#) has broken out in Dakar, the capital of Senegal, for the first time in eight years. Dr. Bassirou Johnson, an epidemiologist at the Ministry of Health, said 66 cases of the highly infectious water-borne disease had been reported in slum areas of the city but there had so far been no deaths. "We have had no cholera cases since 1996, so the disease may well have come from abroad since we are surrounded by the disease," Johnson said. There have been serious outbreaks of cholera in Guinea and Sierra Leone for the past four months. [View Article](#)

## Survey: Few Flu Shot Shortages in Europe

21 October – The Kansas City Star reported that Ireland, like the United States, is struggling to find enough [flu vaccine](#) following the shutdown of Chiron, but other European countries mostly have no shortages. Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland acknowledged difficulties obtaining enough doses of the vaccine. There are sufficient stocks in Spain, Sweden, Austria, Croatia and the Czech Republic, Switzerland, Germany, and in the rest of Britain. Italy also has enough, although suppliers reduce their prices by 40 percent after consumer groups complained. [View Article](#)

## Variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in the UK

23 October – ProMED reported that as of the end of September 2004, 149 people in the United Kingdom have been clinically diagnosed with variant [Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease](#) (vCJD). Five of these patients were still alive. A statistical model indicates that the epidemic passed a peak in 2000. Extrapolation of the model predicts 6 deaths in the next 12 months. There remains the possibility of future peaks and there is also the possibility of on-going person-to-person spread. The first vCJD case was likely to have been acquired from a blood transfusion. The north of the UK continues to have a higher incidence than the south. The only statistically significant geographic cluster of vCJD has been in Leicestershire in 2000. Incidence of sporadic CJD in the UK remains similar to that seen in other countries in Europe and the rest of the world. [View Article](#)

## USNORTHCOM

### Americans Seek Flu Shots in Mexico

21 October – The Mercury News reported that Americans, especially retirees living along the border, are going to Mexico for their annual [flu shot](#). Pharmacists say they sometimes get dozens of requests each day, but most can't fill the orders. Mexican health authorities said pharmacies and private clinics can sell the vaccine with a prescription from a Mexican doctor, although drugstores often ignore that rule and require no prescription. A government-run lab produced 8.5 million doses to give out at government clinics. The Mexican vaccine will be available to children ages 6 months to 23 months and for people 65 and over. But health officials said the Mexican lab didn't produce enough vaccines to meet demand at private clinics or to sell outside Mexico. U.S. officials have often warned that the effectiveness and safety of medicines sold in Mexico can't be guaranteed. However, most doctors and pharmacists interviewed said their main source for the flu vaccine is Aventis Mexico, a branch of the French lab that is supplying the United States with more than half of its flu shots. [View Article](#)

### Big Whooping Cough Outbreak Hits State and County Hard

21 October – The Capital Times reported that Wisconsin is being hit with a major outbreak of [pertussis](#), also known as whooping cough. The state has some 2,900 confirmed and suspected cases, said Dan Hopfensperger, director of the state immunization program. The city of Madison and Dane County had counted 396 cases this year. That's almost five times the total of cases reported for Dane County last year, 83. In 1992 the total was only 66. Much of the spread is among children of middle school and high school age. The vaccines are not licensed to be given after age 7. By the time children are over age 10 they might be losing some of the protection. [View Article](#)

### Canadian Officials Worry about Virus in Blood Supply

23 October – CTV reported that health authorities in Canada are trying to determine what measures need to be taken to ensure the safety of the country's blood supply after learning a little-understood primate virus can be transmitted through blood transfusion. Scientists from the Canadian Public Health Agency reported that [simian foamy virus](#) can be transmitted through blood, leaving a question mark over what steps are needed to protect Canadians who get blood transfusions. "Right now people have absolutely no symptoms even if they have this virus. But because we know that it is transmitted through blood, measures will be taken," said Nathalie Lalonde, a spokeswoman for Health Canada. [View Article](#)

## CDC: Flu Season Off to Slower Than Normal Start

20 October - CNN.com reported that the number of [flu](#) cases in the nation is lower than usual at this time of year. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Julie Gerberding -- addressing fears prompted by an unexpected shortage of flu vaccine this season -- said only five flu cases have been identified in the country so far this flu season, which began the first week of October. Thompson said health officials are aggressively working with other countries, including Canada, to see if they have extra doses of vaccine that could be made available. [View Article](#)

## Company Tied With Sheetz Salmonella Outbreak Closes

22 October - WPXI.com reported that Coronet Foods, a major employer in Wheeling, WV since 1965, has ceased operations. The company said even though the Food and Drug Administration found Coronet was not responsible for the Sheetz [salmonella](#) outbreak, sales suffered. The company said the adverse publicity made it impossible to continue operations. [View Article](#)

## Federal Health Officials Visit Minnesota to Calm Flu Fears

24 October – The Star Tribune reported that Federal health officials stopped in Minneapolis and Rochester as part of a nationwide blitz to try to reassure the public that the [flu](#) shot shortage is not a crisis. "It's unfortunate that some think this is a political issue, because it really is a health issue," said Thomas Skinner, a spokesman for the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The director of the CDC, Dr. Julie Gerberding, appeared in Rochester on Saturday as part of a swing through Kansas, Iowa and Minnesota. The intent, Skinner said, is to "tell the American people firsthand that flu vaccine is on the way and that they need to be patient and persistent. We just don't want people rushing out and standing in line." [View Article](#)

## Flu Shot Clinic Draws 6,000 in San Diego

24 October - Sign on San Diego.com reported that three people were treated after feeling faint or fainting while waiting in line for [flu](#) shots yesterday at a clinic in Mission Valley. One person, an 80-year-old woman, was taken to a hospital after passing out about 10 a.m. Two others were treated after feeling lightheaded, but they did not pass out and did not need to be transported. Clinic spokesman Michael Petruccelli said the clinic gave 6,000 shots yesterday during the session, which opened at 10 a.m. and lasted until after 1 p.m. He said staff members were on hand at 6 a.m., anticipating a large crowd. Petruccelli said that at one point, the line outside the clinic stretched for a mile. "We started to go through the line (telling people) if they didn't feel strong enough, please leave," Petruccelli said. [View Article](#)

## Flu Vaccine Shortage Blamed On Conflicts within System

23 October – The Kansas City Star reported that a system that pits public health measures against free market forces is responsible for the lack of [flu](#) vaccine. Demand for flu shots has risen steadily but manufacturers have slowly dropped out of the vaccine business, leaving the US with only two major companies to produce more than 100 million flu shots. Infectious disease experts are calling for more attractive regulatory and financial conditions to entice companies back into the vaccine market. Liability concerns and uncertain demand for the products are concerns for vaccine-producing companies. Some people have called for the government to guarantee a market for vaccines, either by buying and distributing the vaccine or agreeing to buy any unused doses. Dr. Robert Belshe, director of the Center for Vaccine Development at St. Louis University said that states used to make and distribute vaccines, but realized that private sector companies were better suited to the task. For

the federal government to undertake vaccine manufacturing "would require a major change in policy. It probably wouldn't work, and it would be fraught with all of the headaches of government-run programs," Belshe said. [View Article](#) (registration required)

## Health Officials Set Up Web Site to Track Flu Vaccine Supplies

27 October – The New York Times reported that Federal health officials have created a Web site for state and local health officials to find out where, when and how many [flu](#) doses have been and will be sent to their regions. Some state officials are using the information to redirect doses to the neediest clinics and nursing homes. Since health care in the United States is largely delivered through private companies, public officials rarely have much information about how many flu vaccine doses are shipped and to whom. The new Web site, sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, allows state officials to figure out where vaccine supplies are abundant and where they are scarce and to arrange transfers. Some states are in much better shape than others. The Ohio Department of Health ordered all of its flu vaccine from Aventis, and all of those doses have been delivered. Delaware, on the other hand, ordered nearly all of its vaccine through Chiron. [View Article](#) (registration required)

## Illinois Negotiates Own Purchase of Flu Shots

25 October – HealthDay reported that Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich announced that he had negotiated a tentative agreement to purchase at least 30,000 [flu](#) vaccinations from British wholesalers. Blagojevich said a letter would be sent to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration seeking approval of the deal, which would enable the state to give shots to Illinoisans at risk of serious complications from the flu. The Democratic governor has negotiated a rate of \$7 per dose, adding that the governor intends to allocate the newly found supply to those most at risk -- the elderly, young children, and people with compromised immune systems. Most of the recipients would be elderly nursing home residents, they said. [View Article](#)

## Infection Deaths Termed 'Epidemic'

21 October – Canoe reported that an infection-control specialist described a [C. difficile](#) outbreak in Quebec yesterday as an "epidemic" that has killed 109 people in 10 hospitals over a six-month period this year. Dr. Vivian Loo, author of a study conducted from January to June, said her findings indicate the virulent strain was also indirectly responsible for 108 deaths in the 10 hospitals in Montreal and Sherbrooke, Quebec. Another 33 patients underwent major intestinal surgery to control their affliction. Asked at a news conference if the aggressive hospital-based strain had reached epidemic proportions, she replied: "I would say this is an epidemic, yes." *C. difficile*, which can cause severe diarrhea, has previously been blamed for nearly 100 deaths in Canada since 2001, with the vast majority in Quebec hospitals. [View Article](#)

## More Nasal-Spray Flu Vaccine on the Way

22 October - CIDRAP News reported that MedImmune will produce another million doses of its nasal-spray [influenza](#) vaccine, FluMist, which could free up some injectable flu vaccine for high-risk groups, Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Tommy Thompson announced. "The extra doses will bring MedImmune's production for this year to 3 million doses and the nation's total flu vaccine supply to 61 million," he added. FluMist involves live virus and is licensed only for healthy people between the ages of 5 and 49 but some in the priority categories—healthcare workers and out-of-home caregivers and household contacts of children younger than 6 months—could receive FluMist. Thompson said, "We have about 21 million doses that's going to be shipped at a rate of about 2 1/2 to

3 million doses each week for the next 7 weeks. And the first or second week of January there'll be an additional 2.6 million doses. So if you're out there and you don't have vaccine or your doctor says he doesn't have vaccine, please be persistent and call back." [View Article](#)

## New Treatment Blocks Cancer's Spread

October 26 – Yahoo! News reported that a new kind of treatment against metastatic [cancer](#) cells, which carry cancer from one location to other parts of the body, has been identified. This treatment uses a class of drugs called Src kinase inhibitors to prevent metastatic cancer cells from leaving the bloodstream and invading other organs. "We know that the normal blood vessel wall is one final barrier that metastatic tumor cells must overcome, which allows them to find their way out of the bloodstream and into a metastatic site," lead researcher David A. Cheresh said. Src kinase inhibitors help increase the protective strength of the blood vessels, preventing the metastatic cells from leaving the bloodstream. The researchers tested this approach in mice and found it was effective. [View Article](#)

## NYC's First Flu Outbreak Reported

23 October - Newsday reported that nine people have contracted the [flu](#) at a Manhattan nursing home in the city's first outbreak since the national vaccine shortage. Other residents at the nursing home were given immunizations and the outbreak was not expected to spread. Two-thirds of the city's nursing homes, which house 46,000 people, did not yet have any vaccine because they had ordered doses from Chiron, which was unable to provide the shots. Flu shots for thousands of high-risk residents at public clinics and nursing homes have been suspended across the region, as officials await word from the federal government on whether or not they will get new shipments of the vaccine. The New York City Health Department has not suspended its flu shot program and has given about 2,000 shots per day since last week. The department has 40,000 doses on hand and expects another 100,000 from the CDC in the coming weeks. [View Article](#)

## Over-the-Counter Drugs Cut Cost of Colds

October 26 – Yahoo! News reported that savings of \$4.75 billion a year could be achieved in the US if more people used over-the-counter (OTC) medications to treat common upper respiratory infections. The majority of those savings would come from improved work productivity and fewer visits to doctors. It was sponsored by the Consumer Healthcare Products Association, which promotes the role of over-the-counter medicines. The researchers compared the results of using OTC medications to treat colds with the results of using no treatment. [View Article](#)

## The Flu

27 October – The New York Times published a special section on the [flu](#). [View Articles](#)

# USPACOM

## Another Victim of Bird Flu Dies in Thailand

25 October – Health Day News reported that a 14-year old girl who died six days ago is the latest confirmed human victim of [bird flu](#). Tests confirmed that the girl from the northern province of

Sukhothai had the deadly H5N1 strain of the disease. She's the 12th person in Thailand and the 31st person in Asia to die from Asian outbreaks of bird flu since last December. [View Article](#)

## Anthrax Outbreak in Indonesia Kills Six after Eating Meat from Sick Goat

25 Oct 2004 – Medical News Today reported that Indonesian authorities have confirmed that [anthrax](#) cause the deaths of six patients who had eaten the meat from a sick goat. Some 300,000 vaccines have been distributed as a measure to stop the spread of the disease. The area of Babakan, where the outbreak took place, has been isolated for a period of three months. [View Article](#)

## Avian Flu, Euthanasia Claim 80 Tigers at Thai Zoo

22 October - CIDRAP News reported that about 80 tigers have died or been euthanized at a Thai zoo in the wake of an apparent [avian influenza](#) outbreak that may have been caused by consumption of infected chicken carcasses. Thirty-two tigers have died of H5N1 avian flu at the Sri Racha Tiger Zoo and 51 more were euthanized. Tests on more than 20 tigers showed they were infected with the H5N1 virus, Thai officials said this week. None of the 57 zookeepers has gotten sick from caring for ailing tigers at the zoo. [View Article](#)

## China Issues SARS Alert as Winter Approaches

27 October – Reuters reported that China has issued emergency instructions to hospitals nationwide to isolate patients suffering from severe respiratory diseases to prevent a winter recurrence of [SARS](#). The instructions were given as the number of respiratory cases increases with the onset of cold weather. The notice urged hospitals to isolate respiratory disease patients where necessary and to conduct autopsies on bodies of victims of respiratory infections if the cause of death was not clear. Nine people were confirmed infected with SARS in April this year in Beijing and Anhui province and one died. [View Article](#)

## China Shuts Down Illegal Blood Collection Stations

21 October – Utusan Online reported that China has shut down more than 50 illegal or unsanitary blood collection stations to stop the spread of [HIV/AIDS](#). A government task force found 21 illegal and 44 unsanitary blood collection stations out of 159 it checked randomly across the country. Of these, around 50 were closed and authorities have detained more than 10 people. China says it has an estimated 840,000 HIV/AIDS patients, of which around 20 percent, many of them farmers, are believed to have been infected through unsanitary blood buying schemes carried out in the early 1990s. The infections occurred when donated blood was pooled and its plasma extracted. It was then pumped back into donors' bodies, spreading infection. [View Article](#)

## Dengue Fever Kills 87, Infects Nearly 60,000 in Viet Nam

23 October – ProMED reported that 87 people have died in Viet Nam from mosquito-borne [dengue fever](#) since the beginning of the year, an increase of 64 per cent over the same period in 2003. The deaths were among nearly 60,000 reported infections, an 83 per cent rise year-on-year. The worst affected provinces were in the southern Mekong Delta region, where moist and humid conditions provide ideal breeding grounds for mosquitoes. The region accounted for more than 95 percent of cases. Large outbreaks of the virus tend to occur every 3-5 years, according to health experts, and this year is within the cycle of heavy infection. [View Article](#)

## Japan: 11 Cases of Undiagnosed Encephalitis

21 October – ProMED reported that eleven cases of acute central nervous system failure of unknown cause (assumed to be [encephalitis](#)) occurred between the end of September and mid-October in Japan. Most of the patients were elderly people, and 9 lived in Iwafuna county, Niigata, Japan. Three of the 11 have died. The Niigata prefectural officer stated that it was an unusual occurrence and is investigating with the local health office and the National Institute of Infectious Diseases. [View Article](#)

## Legacy of Polio Lingers

25 October - The Age reported that in 1962, Australia's main vaccine maker released [polio](#) vaccine it knew to be contaminated with a virus that had infected monkeys used in the manufacturing process. The virus, known as SV40, was suspected even then of being harmful to humans. Today researchers have found traces of it in human tumor cells and are fearful of a direct link to a range of cancers. It is likely that hundreds of thousands of Australians received injections of contaminated vaccine as children in the 1950s and 1960s. Health officials say they are still uncertain of whether contamination of the vaccines had occurred and, if so, just what the extent of that contamination was. One of the linked cancers is mesothelioma, a terminal lung disease associated with exposure to asbestos dust. Australia has the world's highest rate of mesothelioma. The Federal Health Minister has ordered an investigation into the release of contaminated vaccine and possible links between the virus and cancer. [View Article](#)

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No articles of note.

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