

USACHPPM

HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE

22 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

Aerosols 'Harm Mother and Baby'

19 October – BBC news reported that air fresheners and aerosols can damage the health of babies and their mothers. Frequent use during pregnancy and early childhood was linked with diarrhea and earache in infants and headaches and depression in mothers. The culprits are [volatile organic compounds](#) (VOCs) released by such products which are irritants. In homes where air fresheners were used every day rather than once a week, 32% more babies had diarrhea. The babies were also more likely to experience earache. The mothers who used air fresheners and aerosols daily had nearly 10% more headaches and were about 26% more likely to experience depression. The lead researcher said: "People may think that using these products makes their homes cleaner and healthier, but being cleaner may not necessarily mean being healthier." [View Article](#)

Aventis Announces More Flu Vaccine Doses Will Be Available in 2005

19 October – Cancer Page.com reported that the Department of Health and Human Services announced that Aventis Pasteur will be able to deliver 2.8 million more [flu vaccine](#) doses in January, in time for the peak of the 2004-2005 flu season in February and March. In total, the nation will have 58 million doses for this flu season, HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson said. "While we don't have as much flu vaccine as we planned for, the combination of the existing 60 million doses of vaccine and anti-viral medicines that can potentially treat 40 million more people gives us the ability to stave off the harsh effects of the flu this coming season," Thompson said. [View Article](#)

Biomedical Engineers Develop Sliver-Sized Sensor to Monitor Glucose Levels

19 October – EurekAlert reported that a "sliver-sensor" – a fully functional, minimally invasive, microscopic new monitor can be placed just under the skin and seen with the naked eye for very accurate, continuous examination of glucose level for [diabetics](#) and other bodily fluid levels – with the help of simple color changes. Colors in the tiny sensor, which is smaller than the tip of a pencil, gradually change from orange (low glucose

levels) to green and then to dark blue as levels increase. A deep, darker blue signifies the highest glucose level that can occur in diabetics. "Many diabetics could greatly benefit from this technology, freeing them from having to take samples from their fingers several times a day to monitor blood sugar levels," Gratzl said. "The monitor could also help doctors with close monitoring of electrolytes, metabolites and other vital biochemicals in the body, primarily those of critically ill patients." [View Article](#)

Chemists Give an Old Laboratory 'Bloodhound' a Sharper Nose

15 October – EurekAlert reported that Purdue University chemists have developed a fast, efficient means of analyzing chemical samples found on surfaces. A team has improved the mass spectrometer, a device well known to chemists for its ability to provide information on the composition of unknown substances. While most mass spectrometers are unwieldy, cabinet-sized machines that require samples to undergo hours of intensive preparation before testing, the team has found a way to test untreated samples right where they are found with a mass spectrometer that can fit in a backpack by creating a wand that can gather the samples from the environment quickly. The new device sprays a sample with a stream of high-velocity gas that contains some reactive chemicals that breaks off a few small particles of the unknown substance, and these combine with the reactive chemicals to form an ionized compound that a mass spectrometer can analyze right then and there.

[View Article](#)

Coffee Tied to Inflammation, Perhaps Heart Disease

19 October – Reuters reported that consuming moderate-to-high amounts of coffee is associated with increased levels of several inflammatory markers, a finding that could help explain previous reports linking the beverage to [heart disease](#). The latest findings are based on a study of about 3000 subjects with no history of cardiovascular disease. Those who consumed more than about 1 cup of the beverage per day had significantly higher levels of all the inflammatory markers tested. The results held true even after factoring in age, gender, smoking, body weight, physical activity, and other potential confounders. [View Article](#)

Complete Flu Primer

19 October – USA Today reported that the [flu](#) virus kills more people every year than any other vaccine-preventable illness. Learn how to keep from getting it, how to know you've got it and how to take care of yourself if you do. [View Panels](#)

Cost, Stigma Are Barriers to Depression Treatment

20 October - Reuters Health reported that some people with [depression](#) may refuse treatment because of the associated stigma, but the majority may go untreated simply because it is too expensive. The current study's looked at 1,117 people who were identified as having current depressive disorder from Spain, Israel, Australia, Brazil, Russia and the US. The proportion of patients receiving any type of specialty mental health care ranged from nearly 30 percent of subjects in Melbourne, Australia, to three percent of those in St. Petersburg. When asked what barred them from receiving treatment, some patients indicated that the treatment was embarrassing, others said that seeking treatment might compromise potential job opportunities, and still others said the depression treatment made them feel sick. However, the most commonly reported barrier to depression treatment was the out-of-pocket costs. Across the six countries, nearly 40 percent of patients said they could not afford to be treated for depression. [View Article](#)

Danger from Depleted Uranium is Found Low in Pentagon Study

19 October - The New York Times reported that a study of weapons made from [depleted uranium](#) has concluded that it is neither toxic enough nor radioactive enough to be a health threat to soldiers in the doses they are likely

to receive. The study measured how quickly uranium that is inhaled was passed through the body. LTC Mark A. Melanson, the program manager for health physics at the Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine, said that the aerosolized particles of depleted uranium were "moderately soluble," and that inhaled particles would dissolve in lung fluids and eventually pass through the kidneys and enter the urine, with half the uranium being excreted in 10 to 100 days. Uranium that is eaten would pass through far faster and with little absorption. [View Article](#) (registration required)

Gulf War Illness May Never Be Explained

18 October – Reuters reported that veterans of the Gulf War suffer more health problems than other members of the military but the causes of the mysterious array of symptoms may never be known. Men and women who served in the 1990-1991 war are 20 percent more likely to suffer from headaches, fatigue and pain but do not have a higher rate of cancer or heart disease. "There is no shadow of a doubt that something has happened, something has gone wrong," Professor Simon Wessely, of King's College London, said. But the increase in ill health is unlikely to be a new disease or have a single cause. "There are huge areas that remain unclear and I am afraid I suspect they will always remain unclear," he added. [View Article](#)

Hepatitis C Virus Linked To Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma

17 October – EurekAlert reported that patients infected with the [hepatitis C](#) virus (HCV) are six times as likely to develop [non-Hodgkin's lymphoma](#) (NHL) than individuals who are virus free. HCV infected patients have a 17-fold higher risk for developing diffuse large B-Cell lymphoma which is the most common variety of NHL, comprising approximately 30 percent of all NHL patients. Compared to Europe and Japan, incidence of hepatitis C viral infection is fairly low in North America, and previous studies from Canada and the United States have not shown an association between the virus and development of NHL. The British Columbia study examined HCV status in 550 NHL cases and 205 population controls. The study had the strength of numbers of patients to ascertain an association between HCV and NHL, confirming the viral-cancer link suspected in studies from other areas of the world where the virus is more prevalent. [View Article](#)

Monkeys Serve as First Animal Model of Smallpox

14 October - CIDRAP News reported that Federal researchers have succeeded in infecting monkeys with fatal [smallpox](#), creating the first animal model of the disease for use in testing vaccines and treatments. Researchers exposed macaques to high doses of variola (smallpox) virus, causing most of them to die of the hemorrhagic form of smallpox within a few days. Scientists previously thought that humans were the only species susceptible to smallpox. "The demonstration that variola virus strains can produce lethal disease in monkeys is a significant advance toward the development of antiviral drugs and improved vaccines, as well as an improved understanding of variola pathogenesis," said the report by the US Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Stanford University. Treatments and vaccines can be approved by the Food and Drug Administration on the basis of animal data alone if human trials are impractical or unethical, as in the case of smallpox. [View Article](#)

Pandemic Flu Preparation

The Department of Defense Pandemic Influenza Preparation and Response Planning Guidance, dated 15 September is available on the [DOD-GEIS website](#).

Scientists Develop New Vaccine Technology

19 October – Reuters reported that British scientists have developed a new technology that could deliver cheaper, life-saving [vaccines](#) without refrigeration to millions of children in remote areas of the world. Each

year up to 50 percent of vaccines are ruined because of temperature damage. The stable-liquid vaccine technology devised by researchers at Cambridge Biostability eliminates the need for costly refrigeration. "It could revolutionize how we deliver vaccines in the developing world," said Dr Stewart Tyson, of the Department for International Development which will provide 950,000 pounds for the project. The cold chain adds an estimated cost of \$200-\$300 million each year, according to the World Health Organisation. [View Article](#)

Scientists Identify New Cause of Obesity

15 October – EurekAlert reported that a brain protein already known to control the urge to eat has now been found to influence appetite in a second way. Earlier research has shown that this protein, called MC4R, receives signals through at least two pathways about the status of the body's fat reserves. If fat stores are increasing, these signals stimulate MC4R, triggering physiological responses that decrease appetite. If fat reserves are decreasing, these signals turn off, deactivating MC4R and increasing appetite. Mutations that impair MC4R's response to the signals are the most common genetic cause of severe [obesity](#). The new research shows that MC4R also affects appetite by affecting its intrinsic, or baseline, level of activity. The discovery suggests a promising new strategy to combat obesity, the scientists report. Rather than developing drugs that significantly boost MC4R's response to the appetite-suppression signals, a better approach may be a drug that assures the sustained, low-level MC4R activity that the researchers showed is essential for the protein to regulate appetite. [View Article](#)

Under-Tongue Immunotherapy Cuts Asthma in Kids

19 Oct – Reuters reported that children with grass pollen allergy are prone to develop asthma. A type of immune therapy that consists of an extract of the major grass pollens administered under the tongue before and during the spring pollen season for three consecutive years is a "safe and effective" alternative to injection immunotherapy. When compared to children with standard symptomatic therapy, the sub-lingual immunotherapy group used less allergy medication in the second and third years of therapy and tended to have lower allergy symptom scores. After three years, children in the first group were nearly 4 times more likely than in the immunotherapy group to develop asthma. [View Article](#)

Warning over Bad Health Advice Online

18 October – Medical News Today reported that following health advice given on the Internet could leave people in worse health. Although researchers found that using the Internet improves people's knowledge of medical conditions, the evidence suggests that so-called "cyber-medicine" does not help people change their behavior. One explanation could be that the more people know about a disease, the less concerned they become about the effect it will have on them. People are less frightened when they discover more about an illness such as diabetes, because they realize there is no immediate threat and are therefore not motivated to change their habits. [View Article](#)

WHO Launches New "5 Keys" Strategy

13 October – The World Health Organization reported that each year, [unsafe food](#) makes at least two billion people ill worldwide, or about one third of the global population. Simple prevention techniques could significantly reduce this burden of disease, which can cause serious illness or death. Its "5 Keys" strategy is a series of five simple actions which people can undertake at home or at work while preparing and consuming food. These are: keep hands and cooking surfaces clean; separate raw and cooked food; cook food thoroughly; keep food stored at safe temperatures; and use safe water and raw ingredients. [View Article](#)

Focus on Epidemiology

Health Disparities Experienced by Hispanics --- United States

15 October – MMWR reported that in the 2000 census, 35.3 million persons in the United States and 3.8 million persons in Puerto Rico identified themselves as Hispanic. Hispanics constituted 12.5% of the U.S. population in the 50 states. For certain health conditions, Hispanics bear a disproportionate burden of disease, injury, death, and disability when compared with non-Hispanic whites. The leading causes of death among Hispanics varied as well. In 2001, Hispanics lost more years of potential life than non-Hispanic whites for the following causes of death: stroke (18% more), chronic liver disease and cirrhosis (62%), diabetes (41%), human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) disease (168%), and homicide (128%). In 2000, Hispanics had higher incidence for cancers of the cervix (152% higher) and stomach (63% higher for males and 150% higher for females). During 1999--2000, Mexican Americans aged 20--74 years reported higher rates of overweight (11% higher for males and 26% higher for females) and obesity (7% higher for males and 32% higher for females) than non-Hispanic whites, and Mexican-American youths aged 12--19 years also reported higher rates of overweight (112% higher for males and 59% higher for females). Despite recent progress, ethnic disparities persist among the leading indicators of good health identified in the national health objectives for 2010. [View Report](#)

DoD-GEIS: Influenza Vaccine Shortage

20 October - Influenza activity is occurring at a low level within the U.S., according to DoD and CDC influenza surveillance systems. The vaccine shortage, affecting the U.S. inactivated flu vaccine supply, has had widespread impact on public awareness and fueled demand for vaccine. Media coverage has focused on lines forming to health care facilities, drug stores and other sites where consumer expectation is not being met and on related Presidential campaign remarks. Unprecedented measures have been employed by public health authorities and political leadership to direct vaccine to those at highest risk medically. Vaccine shortages in previous seasons made prioritization policy necessary for DoD since shortages have implications for readiness and current military operations as well as for clinical care in MTFs. State-by-state and federal legal authority have been posted on the [CDC Public Health Preparedness](#) website. The [Interim DoD policy](#) supports the use of vaccine according to priorities addressing both medically high-risk beneficiaries and military readiness. This season's shortage, with its political, economic, and medical consequences, along with public health action taken, should be carefully considered in light of a predictable but more intense vaccine shortage during the next influenza pandemic. *Information on influenza (avian and human) including the DoD Global Influenza Program, WNV, Leishmaniasis and severe respiratory syndromes, including SARS, is available on the [DoD-GEIS website](#).*

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

Saudi Arabia: Recurrence of Hepatitis A in Asir

18 October – ProMED reported that 10 cases of [hepatitis A](#) have been registered in villages and schools along the Asir coast. The cases appeared on the same day among students of Al-Shatea and Qur Memorization schools

in Al-Qahma. The patients were transferred to Al-Qahma General Hospital. More than 450 students were vaccinated. Samples of drinking water were taken for analysis to identify the causes for the reappearance of the epidemic. Preliminary analyses indicate that the causes of the epidemic include irrigating vegetable farms with sewage water in addition to drilling septic tanks to depths without building them. This caused the mixture of sewage water with the groundwater. [View Article](#)

USEUCOM

Breaking the Disease and Poverty Cycle

18 October – The Statesman reported that the first effective [malaria](#) vaccine promises to save millions of lives. Scientists were jubilant when results of the trial involving children between one and four years in southern Mozambique showed that the vaccine cut malaria infections by 30 per cent and reduced the incidence of severe disease by 58 per cent. This is enough to slash the toll of death, sickness and poverty inflicted by the disease, which kills between one and three million people a year. But it will be at least five years before the vaccine can be made available, and it is not yet clear if it can be made cheaply enough for widespread use. According to Pedro Alonso, heading the study in Mozambique, “This is currently the most advanced malaria vaccine in development, and, can be a useful public health tool.” [View Article](#)

Burundi: Diseases Rife in Cantonment Camps

20 October – IRIN News reported that hundreds of combatants from various former rebel groups who are cantoned at Bulamata Camp in Burundi's northwestern Bubanza Province are suffering from [malaria](#) and [diarrhea](#) and have limited access to medical care. Some 700 combatants at Bulamata live in squalor. Bubanza Hospital had treated combatants for four months without getting paid but it is now only treating those with life-threatening diseases. Leaders of five former rebel movements denounced the poor living conditions of their combatants. Meanwhile, 50 cases of [cholera](#) have been registered in the southern town of Rumonge. Most of the sick are residents of Rumonge town, where they are compelled to drink contaminated water. [View Article](#)

Five People Treated in Namibia Anthrax Outbreak

20 October - Reuters reported that five people in Namibia's Caprivi strip region have been admitted to hospital with suspected [anthrax](#), which has killed elephants, buffalo and zebras in the southwest African country. All five are believed to have come into contact with infected animals. They were admitted to the Katima Mulilo State Hospital and were in a stable condition. "All five - four adults and a 10-year-old child -- are suffering from skin anthrax," said Michael Likando, of the Caprivi Health Directorate. "The main mission is to ask residents not to eat or touch meat of any animal, be it wild or domestic, that died of unknown causes," he said. [View Article](#)

Israel: Paratyphoid Fever

19 October - ProMED reported that during the past two months, 10 Israeli tourists have developed [septicemia](#) following return from northern India. Quinolone-resistant *Salmonella paratyphi* A was recovered from blood culture in all cases. The source of infection and extent of this phenomenon are unclear. [View Article](#)

Rare Sexually Transmitted Infection Outbreak in London Gay Men

14 October – Aidsmap News reported that the Health Protection Agency (HPA) has identified an outbreak of another sexually transmitted infection amongst gay men in London. This time, 14 cases of [shigellosis](#) have been

reported. Shigellosis is highly infectious, can cause severe, prolonged and sometimes bloody diarrhea, and can be more serious in HIV-positive people. This is the third report of an outbreak of unusual sexually transmitted infection in gay men in as many weeks. Previously the HPA identified outbreaks of [hepatitis A](#) in London and [lymphogranuloma venereum](#) (LGV), an unusual form of chlamydia, throughout Europe. The HPA is currently investigating 14 cases of *S. sonnei* in gay men who have become ill since the beginning of August. The majority of cases have been reported by genitourinary (GUM) clinics in North London, but the men reside throughout Greater London. The HPA suggests it is likely that there could be many more men affected. [View Article](#)

UK: Shetland 'Ripe' for Measles Epidemic

17 October – The Sunday Herald reported that government scientists are warning of an impending [measles](#) epidemic on a scale not seen for 40 years as a direct result of the falling rate of MMR vaccination uptake. Computer modeling by the Health Protection Agency (HPA) predicts an epidemic raging through London this winter, while other parts of the UK could succumb to the illness in 2005/6. Although Scotland is likely to be spared the worst of such an outbreak due to higher levels of MMR uptake, Shetland, where MMR uptake is comparable with the lowest levels in England, is “ripe” for an epidemic. London is reckoned to have 350,000 susceptible under-16s, meaning a possible epidemic comprising many thousands of cases. Modeling suggests that in London around 10% of unvaccinated children and 20% of unvaccinated adults will be hospitalized. [View Article](#)

Warning over Salmonella Egg Risk

14 October – BBC News reported that UK health experts have issued a warning about the risk of [salmonella](#) poisoning from eating Spanish eggs. Certain less common strains of salmonella have made 6,000 people ill, and killed 15 in England and Wales over the past two years. The Health Protection Agency says many of the cases are linked to eggs imported from Spain. It has warned that the imports should not be eaten by children and elderly people. Although few eggs are imported into the UK, cheap Spanish produce is used by the catering industry. The HPA has investigated more than 80 outbreaks of food poisoning caused by less common forms of salmonella enteritidis over the past two years, involving at least 2,000 confirmed cases. Nearly seven out of ten confirmed cases of the salmonella linked to Spanish eggs over the past two years were traced back to restaurants. [View Article](#)

USNORTHCOM

1.7 Million Veterans Lack Coverage

20 October – The Chicago Sun-Times reported that nearly 1.7 million veterans have no [health insurance](#) or access to government hospitals and clinics. The study also says veterans are losing their health insurance at a faster rate than the general population, and the lack of health care is particularly acute among younger military members who served in the most recent wars. The report cites several reasons former servicemen and women aren't able to access medical care. Some parts of the country lack VHA facilities, and those that don't can have long waiting lists. The report also said that co-payments for specialty care can be too expensive for some vets, while others may not qualify for VHA care because they make too much money -- a threshold generally hovering around \$24,000 a year. The study said World War II and Korean War veterans had health insurance through Medicare, but many vets with more recent military service were without coverage. One in 11 Vietnam War-era vets lacks health care, while a third of those under age 25 have no health insurance. [View Article](#)

Canada Tells U.S. 'No' to Flu Vaccine

16 October – The Washington Times reported that Canada's Alberta and Ontario provinces are cracking down on the growing number of U.S. residents driving across the border to obtain [flu shots](#). As a result of the growing numbers of non-residents seeking vaccines, Ontario Health Ministry officials instructed the province's 37 public health officers to start demanding proof of Ontario residency before giving anyone the vaccine. Alberta has restricted free flu shots to residents of the province as a "strictly short-term measure" during the supply shortage in the US, said John Tuckwell, a spokesman for Alberta Health and Wellness. [View Article](#)

CDC/Aventis Pasteur Ship Influenza Vaccine to High-Priority Groups

15 Oct – The CDC reported that more than 2 million doses of [influenza vaccine](#) were shipped this week by Aventis Pasteur to health care providers throughout the country who serve the high-priority groups recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to receive influenza vaccine during the 2004-2005 season. After pairing CDC information on geographic locations of high-priority risk groups and Aventis Pasteur information on providers scheduled to receive vaccine for the high-risk populations, this round of influenza vaccine went to the Veterans Administration, Long-term Care Facilities/Acute Care Hospitals, State Public Health Officials, Vaccines for Children program, and Private Providers Who Care for Young Children. "More doses of vaccine will be going out over the next 6-7 weeks so there will be more opportunity for those who need the vaccine to get it in time for this year's influenza season," said CDC Director Dr. Julie Gerberding. [View Article](#)

FDA Lists Plans for Making Produce Safer

18 October - CIDRAP News reported that in response to an apparent increase in illnesses due to contaminated produce, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) today released an "action plan" for reducing microbial contamination of fresh fruits and vegetables. The FDA document cites a federal estimate that at least 12% of [foodborne illness](#) cases in outbreaks in the 1990s were linked to fresh produce. Brackett said people are eating more fresh produce in response to advice from health experts battling the obesity epidemic. The new plan lists four broad objectives: (1) prevent contamination of fresh produce with pathogens, (2) minimize the public health impact when contamination of fresh produce occurs, (3) improve communication with producers, preparers, and consumers about fresh produce, and (4) facilitate and support research relevant to fresh produce. [View Article](#)

Health Canada's Fight against *E. coli* Goes High-tech

17 October – Canada.com reported that health officials are going increasingly high-tech in their efforts to track and contain outbreaks of [E. coli](#) poisoning. "We're continuing to see between 900 and 1,500 cases a year that are reported to us, with an average probably being around 1,100," said Health Canada epidemiologist Dr. Andrea Ellis. The source of a recent outbreak in Calgary, which affected more than 50 people last month, has not been determined. But a new computer monitoring system called PulseNet Canada is helping health officials keep track of outbreaks, said Ellis. PulseNet is tied in with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta. The network permits rapid comparison of patterns through an electronic database and provides critical data for the early recognition and timely investigation of outbreaks. Ellis said that information can help determine if an outbreak is isolated or part of a more serious problem affecting a large number of people. [View Article](#)

How U.S. Got Down to Two Makers of Flu Vaccine

17 October – The Washington Post reported that for two decades, Wyeth Pharmaceuticals made injectable [influenza vaccine](#). For the winter of 2002-03, it made 21 million doses. But it turned out a lot fewer people wanted it, so the next spring Wyeth threw away 7 million unsold doses, for a loss of \$30 million. Wyeth was also facing millions of dollars in required improvements to keep its plant up to standards required by the Food

and Drug Administration so it quit making flu shots. MedImmune, which made a "live" virus vaccine squirted up the nose, made 5 million doses of FluMist for last winter. Only 450,000 doses were sold. Vaccines have never been very attractive investments. The global market for them is about \$6 billion a year, compared with \$340 billion for drugs. Thirty years ago, more than a dozen companies made flu shots for the US. Five years ago, the number was down to four. This year, there is one left. Flu vaccine has been made by hand-injecting virus into fertilized chicken eggs. One egg grows enough virus for 4 or 5 doses of vaccine. In addition, nobody wants to invest hundreds of millions of dollars and five-to-seven years in building an egg-based vaccine plant when within the next decade, flu vaccine will start to be grown in cell cultures, not eggs. Experts agree that only some form of direct government incentive is likely to solve the problem of a small and vulnerable manufacturing base. [View Article](#)

Mexico Also Limiting Flu Shots

16 October – AZ Central.com reported that Arizonans shouldn't waste their time or money crossing the border to receive [flu shots](#). "It's only being offered to high-risk groups in Sonora, Mexico," said Dr. Cecilia Rosales, office chief for border health at the Arizona Department of Health Services. Nogales, Mexico, has 2.5 million residents and has received 64,000 doses of flu vaccine. It is unclear how many residents fit into the high-risk category. Pharmacies surveyed near the Mexico-Arizona border said they had not been approached by Americans seeking flu shots. Mexico has a bigger supply than usual because it is expanding its vaccination program to children younger than 23 months this year. Their vaccine is produced by Birmex, a state-controlled company. José González of the Mexican Health Secretariat said he does not believe the United States has approached Mexico about buying any of its supply. "We have a sufficient amount for our needs but not for selling abroad." [View Article](#)

Osteoporosis May Reach Epidemic Levels by 2020

18 October – The Cincinnati Post reported that the first-ever Surgeon General's report on bone health indicates [osteoporosis](#) could reach epidemic levels within 15 years. By the year 2020, one of two Americans over the age of 50 will be at risk for fractures from low bone mass or osteoporosis. The bone-thinning disease, mostly associated with the elderly, is expected to become more of a problem as life expectancy increases. Currently, 44 million Americans either have the disease or are at risk due to low bone mass. [View Article](#)

Poor, Uninsured Don't Fill Emergency Rooms

19 October – Reuters reported that a new study on emergency rooms disputes the common wisdom that the poor and uninsured are filling them up. In fact, more than 80 percent of patients seen in emergency rooms have health insurance and a usual source of health care. People without a regular doctor or clinic were 25 percent less likely to have had an emergency visit than those with a private doctor, the researchers found. Eighty-five percent had medical insurance and 79 percent had incomes above the poverty level. An estimated 45 million Americans lack health insurance, but that leaves 85 percent of the population with coverage, either public or private. [View Article](#)

Thompson Tells Elderly Not to Stand in Line for Flu Vaccine

18 October – The Miami Herald reported that the U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson said there will be enough [flu vaccine](#) available for most people who need it and told seniors to stop standing in long lines to get a shot. Panicked seniors have been waiting in lengthy queues at pharmacies and supermarkets around the country to get flu shot since news of a shortage surfaced this month. Thompson said flu vaccine will be reallocated to parts of the country where it is needed most. Most at risk to have severe complications from the flu are seniors and young children. He advised people to first seek the shot from their doctor or a clinic. If that

fails, they should notify the CDC in Atlanta. There are still 20 million doses for seniors and 4 million doses for children that are being shipped out at a rate of about 3 million per week, Thompson said. [View Article](#)

US Guideline Aims to Keep BSE Agent out of Animal Feed

15 October - CIDRAP News reported that the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has announced a new guideline to prevent the use of cattle infected with [bovine spongiform encephalopathy](#) (BSE) in any animal feed. The use of any cattle parts in cattle feed has been banned since 1997, but the new recommendation says that animal feed and feed ingredients with material obtained from a BSE-positive animal are considered adulterated and cannot be fed to any other animals. "FDA recommends that any such adulterated feed or feed ingredients be recalled or otherwise removed from the marketplace," the guideline says. The FDA recommendation is not binding, and the agency said it would continue to accept comments on it. [View Article](#)

US Stops Inspecting Imported Tobacco

18 October – Health Day News reported that congress has abolished the longstanding requirement that the government inspect imported tobacco to make sure it's safe from unapproved chemicals and pesticides. With more tobacco firms relying on imported leaf, the move could make [smoking](#) cigarettes even more harmful than it already is. Officials at the three government agencies that have authority to inspect imported agricultural products -- the Agriculture Department, the Homeland Security Department, and the Food and Drug Administration -- said they knew of no other import that didn't require some kind of inspection. [View Article](#)

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Blood Donations Cause Serious Hepatitis B Concern in India

14 October – The Asia-Pacific Disease Outbreak/Surveillance Report stated that Jharkhand is at risk of becoming an endemic zone, with approximately one per cent of blood donors testing positive for [hepatitis B](#). According to the Jharkhand State AIDS Control Society, out of over 50,600 units of blood collected from donors statewide, about 535 tested positive for the hepatitis B virus. The situation is alarming in Jharkhand with one out of every 100 donors being hepatitis B positive. [View Article](#)

To Avoid SARS, China Bans Eating Civets

19 October – The Australian reported that China hopes to avoid any new [SARS](#) outbreaks with a preventative plan that is likely to include a ban on the consumption of civet cats in Guangdong province restaurants. China's vice health minister, Wang Longde, plans soon to travel to Guangdong, where SARS first emerged in late 2002, to finalize plans for avoiding the disease during the coming winter flu season. Researchers say the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) virus might have originated in civet cats and other animals eaten as delicacies in Guangdong. The SARS monitoring will focus on Guangdong and it's not necessary to impose a total ban on the sale of civet cats across the country. In January, Chinese health authorities culled nearly 4000 civet cats seized from restaurants, markets and farms. [View Article](#)

Chinese Ministry of Health Urging Survey of Blood Sellers with HIV

14 October – The Asia-Pacific Disease Outbreak/Surveillance Report stated that the Chinese Ministry of Health is urging local governments to survey people who have sold blood since the early 1990s looking for those with [HIV](#) infections. Thousands of people, mostly farmers in dozens of provinces including Henan and Anhui, sold blood around 1995, before blood was tested for HIV. Many were infected with the virus and have begun to

develop AIDS. China started to test blood used in transfusions in 1997. The country has also campaigned to close all illegal blood stations. The privacy rights of sufferers must be strictly protected during the survey process and all personal information kept confidential. The government will pay for the tests and provide free treatment to all new cases found. [View Article](#)

Floods Worsen, Diarrhea Breaks Out in Northern Bangladesh

15 October – The Asia-Pacific Disease Outbreak/Surveillance Report stated that the flood situation in Rajshahi and Naogaon (in Northern Bangladesh) has become worse as new areas have gone under water and waterborne diseases such as [diarrhea](#) have broken out in some affected areas. In Naogaon, around 60 diarrhea patients have been hospitalized. Most areas of Naogaon town have gone under water. Several hundred people in the district have been living under knee-to waist-deep water for more than a week. [View Article](#)

New Case of Mad Cow Disease

15 October – The Star Online reported that Japan confirmed its 14th case of [mad cow disease](#) yesterday, three years after the first discovery prompted strict checks on its beef industry. The Health Ministry concluded that a Holstein cow, born in Japan's northern main island of Hokkaido in October 2000 and which died on Saturday, tested positive for the brain-wasting disease. The test was carried out after the cow was found dead in a meadow and it was not known if the animal had shown symptoms of the disease while it was alive, a ministry official said. Japan is the only Asian country to have confirmed mad cow disease. [View Article](#)

Second Bird Flu Outbreak Suspected

18 October – The Age reported that a second outbreak of suspected [bird flu](#) in southern Vietnam was reported but officials played it down. "Chickens only died in a few farms so it's not a big deal," said Bui Quang Anh, the head of the veterinary department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. Chickens began dying in Tan My Chanh commune in Tien Giang province at the beginning of October. Samples from the one-month old chickens from Tien Giang province have been sent for tests, Anh said. Around 2,000 chickens died and another 3,000 were culled. On Saturday, local officials confirmed another outbreak of bird flu in Long An and Hau Giang provinces in the Mekong Delta. [View Article](#)

Singapore Man Dies in Rare Cholera Outbreak

18 October – Yahoo! News reported that a rare outbreak of [cholera](#) in Singapore has killed an 89-year-old man, among nine people infected, and authorities are trying to trace the source of the disease. Singapore last saw an outbreak of cholera, an acute disease caused by consuming contaminated food or water, in 1999. No one died in that outbreak. The elderly man was the ninth person hospitalized after the cluster of cholera cases was found in the eastern part of the wealthy island. Three people are still in hospital. Investigations have found most of those infected visited food stalls and restaurants in a single area and food samples from the outlets have been sent for laboratory tests. The Ministry of Health said 201 food handlers and 39 people connected to the patients have been screened. [View Article](#)

Thailand: Bird Flu Killed 23 Tigers

19 October – Yahoo! News reported that twenty-three tigers have died from bird flu at a private zoo in Thailand after being fed the carcasses of chickens infected with the disease, a government official said Tuesday. The tigers had been dying at the Sriracha Tiger Zoo in central Chonburi province since Sept. 14, said Charal Trinvuthipong, director of the Bird Flu Prevention and Elimination Center. The animal park was forced to close its doors to the public while authorities investigated. "We've discovered that all 23 dead tigers had bird flu," he said. "We've found that another 30 tigers are sick. We believe that the tigers contracted bird flu because they ate

chicken carcasses, and we believe the carcasses had bird flu." Veterinarians are checking for the disease at chicken farms in the province, where the zoo got the birds that were fed to the tigers, he added. [View Article](#)

WHO Sounds Alarm on STD Incidence

13 October - The Sun Star Zamboanga reported that the World Health Organization (WHO) warned of the alarming incidence of [sexually transmitted diseases](#) (STD) in Zamboanga City, Philippines. WHO representative Dr. Jean Marc Olive said that there is a 40-percent incidence of STD in the city. The City Health Officer confirmed the statistics, stressing the problem on deportees who landed in the city from Malaysia. The Zamboanga health authorities will contact Malaysia's health department to check on the condition of the deportees before they will be transported to Zamboanga City. [View Article](#)

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PAHO Reports on the Care and Treatment of People with HIV in the Americas

13 October - News-Medical.Net reported that the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) issued reports on the first seven of 47 countries and territories on the care and treatment of people with [HIV](#) in the Americas. They reflect a wide range of differences on prices, coverage and health costs. The [fact sheets](#) – those released today are on Belize, Canada, Ecuador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and Paraguay – contain data on antiretroviral (ARV) coverage, lines of treatment and ARV prices. They also include information on laboratory diagnostic supplies, human resource capacity, and voluntary counseling and testing. Antiretroviral drugs prevent the emergence of opportunistic diseases characteristic of AIDS. The cost of treating a patient with antiretroviral drugs for a year varied from US \$2,400 in Nicaragua to \$148 in Ecuador. The percentage of people who need antiretroviral drugs and get this treatment also varies significantly. Coverage ranged from 11 percent in Nicaragua to 58 percent in Panama. [View Article](#)

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

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