

Overseas briefs

Source: World Health Organization (WHO)

This material has been condensed from information on the WHO internet site. A link to this site can be found under 'Related sites' on the CDI homepage.

Influenza in China

According to analysis performed at the China National Influenza Centre, Chinese Academy of Preventive Medicine, the strain currently circulating in the country is similar to the influenza A(H3N2) Sydney strain which was circulating at the end of the season in 1998, and which is covered in the current recommended vaccine. Further characterization of the isolates will be carried out at the WHO collaborating laboratory at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (United States). Detailed analysis of the viruses is expected to be completed within 2-3 weeks.

Meningococcal meningitis in Sudan

An outbreak of meningococcal meningitis has been reported in the Northern Darfur region. The first cases were reported on 12 December 1998, and the total of 126 for December 1998 is 5 times higher than the number reported for the same month in 1997. Cases have continued to be reported at an increasing rate, reaching a total of 169 by 6 January. Over 20 deaths have been reported.

The organism has been identified as *Neisseria meningitidis* serogroup A, and tests indicate that it is sensitive to first-line antibiotics. Sudan lies in the so-called meningitis belt of sub-Saharan Africa. A large epidemic last occurred in 1988-1989, with over 40 000 cases and 7 500 deaths.

WHO is sending a team to assist with the assessment of the epidemiological situation and needs. Other international partners, such as UNICEF, *Médecins sans frontières* and the International Federation of Red Cross

and Red Crescent Societies, are also making plans to support control of the outbreak.

Cholera, Mozambique (update)

Mozambique, where cholera is endemic, has been suffering an ongoing epidemic since August 1997. At the end of July 1998, the total number of cases officially reported to WHO was 26 738 with 619 deaths. Although the national cholera committee of the Ministry of Health made every effort to ensure epidemic preparedness in the northern provinces of Cabo Delgado and Nampula which were not yet affected, cholera has been reported in these provinces, with a major increase in cases since November 1998. The neighbouring provinces of Niassa, Tete and Zambezia have also started to report cholera cases. At mid-December 1998, the cumulative figures were 34 621 cases and 985 deaths. The disease has spread rapidly to several districts, and the situation remains critical.

Yellow fever in Burkina Faso

Two yellow fever cases have been reported in Burkina Faso, one of which has been confirmed. Both cases occurred in a village in Batie District, Gaoua Region in the south of the country near the border with Côte d'Ivoire. The cases were one adult male of 35 years and a 14 year old boy of the same family. The adult case had onset on 18 November and died on 24 November before a blood sample could be taken. The boy had onset on 29 November, was hospitalized on 4 December and is now improving. The *Centre Muraz* in Bobo Dioulasso tested serum from the boy and reported that it was positive for IgM yellow fever antibody. The Ministry of Health has a stock of approximately 200,000 doses of yellow fever vaccine, of which 30,000 have been sent to the region for an emergency vaccination campaign. Yellow fever was last reported in Burkina Faso in the early 1980's when a large outbreak occurred in 1983.

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