

EID Weekly Updates:

Emerging and Reemerging Infectious Diseases, Region of the Americas



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Pneumonia in El Salvador

Yesterday the Ministry of Health of El Salvador, in light of the rising number of pneumonia cases in the country, declared a *Red Alert* for an imminent epidemic. Between Epidemiological Weeks (EW) 25 (ending on 21 June) and 29 (ending on 19 July), a total of 14,082 cases of pneumonia have been reported. This number of cases represents 79% more than what was registered for the same period in 2002. The most affected age group is that of children under five (at a rate of 8,000 per 100,000 inhabitants). This case increase is distributed throughout the entire country: 3,668 cases in the western area of the country, 1,421 cases in the central area; 3,395 cases in the metropolitan area, 2,939 cases in the paracentral area, and 2,659 cases in the eastern area. Between January 2003 and July 23, a total of 288 deaths have been reported. The interventions implemented by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare are aimed at strengthening hospital care. (Source: PAHO/WHO Representative Office in El Salvador.)

Hantavirus in Panama

The Gorgas Memorial Institute for Health Studies has confirmed the *first reported case for 2003* of Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS) in Panama. The case is a 44-year-old farmer from the Canajagua region, in Las Tablas district, Province of Los Santos—the same province where in 2000 the firsts HPS cases were reported. As a result of the appearance of this case, a team from the Ministry of Health and the Gorgas Institute was sent to the region to conduct epidemiological investigation and control activities. (Source: Ministry of Health of Panama.)

West Nile Virus (WNV) in USA

Up to 24 July 2003, 12 cases of WNV were confirmed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the United States. The cases were recorded in the

states of Alabama (1), Colorado (1), Iowa (1), Minnesota (1), Ohio (1), South Carolina (1), South Dakota (1) and Texas (5). Full information is available at the [CDC website](#).

Icterohemorrhagic Disease in Peru

In the town of Pampa Cedar, department of Pasco, Peru, the General Office of Epidemiology and the National Institute of Health concluded an investigation conducted to verify *three deaths* of members of a family with acute icterohemorrhagic syndrome, which occurred between Epidemiological Weeks (EW) 16 (ending on 19 April) and 23 (ending on 7 June), all from the town of Cedro Pampa in the district of Villa Rica. Laboratory serologic results indicate positivity for hepatitis B (in all three cases); and in two of them, (that of the 8- and 13-year-olds) for Delta hepatitis virus (HDV) by detection of HDV surface antigens from the core. A fourth death was also reported, based on data obtained at the time of the research, with a diagnosis of liver carcinoma from another town in the same district. The affected area has a history of cases of yellow fever, hepatitis B, leptospirosis, and bartonellosis, among others. (Source: PAHO/WHO Representative Office in Lima, Peru.)

Influenza: Preparations of the Southern Cone Countries in the Event of a Pandemic

Activities have been carried out to comply with the recommendations from the document PAHO/DPC/CDC/32/03, *Guidelines for the Preparation of a Subregional Plan of Southern Cone Countries for an Influenza Pandemic*. This report is on The PAHO web is publishing the [report online](#).

On 23 July 2003, PAHO held a conference call among experts from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay in charge of national activities revolving around surveillance, emerging and reemerging disease prevention and control, influenza laboratories; PAHO staff in the countries and CDC staff of the Influenza Branch. Two main points were discussed:

1. The *progress* made by the countries in preparing the plan on national preparedness in the event of an influenza pandemic, especially in identifying multi-institutional national committees.
2. The *current situation* of sentinel surveillance; sample collection, management, transport and shipments; and dissemination of information via *FluNet*.

Among the **main conclusions** reached, we note the following:

- The need for establishing *alternative mechanisms for purchasing antivirals* in a centralized way and for stockpiling in case of a pandemic.
- The *difficulties* created by the need for expanded surveillance, which arise in some countries with regard to sample shipments from sub-national sentinel sites.
- Only 3 out of the 6 participating countries claimed to have a *Multi-institutional and Multisectoral Committee* in charge of preparing a contingency plan for an influenza pandemic.

IIIrd Scientific Congress of the Gorgas Memorial Institute for Health Studies

A Congress entitled *The Present State and Future of Medicine in the Tropics* will take

place to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the institution (18–20 August 2003, Panama City), together with the *IIIrd Scientific Meeting of Emerging and Reemerging Diseases for Central America, the Dominican Republic and Haiti*. Additional information on the event (in Spanish) can be obtained on the [Gorgas website](#).