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Cumulative Number of Confirmed Human Cases of Avian Influenza

16 October 2006

Country	2003		2004		2005		2006		Total	
	C	D	C	D	C	D	C	D	C	D
Azerbaijan	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	5	8	5
Cambodia	0	0	0	0	4	4	2	2	6	6
China	1	1	0	0	8	5	12	8	21	14
Djibouti	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Egypt	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	6	15	6
Indonesia	0	0	0	0	19	12	53	43	72	55
Iraq	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	3	2
Thailand	0	0	17	12	5	2	3	3	25	17
Turkey	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	4	12	4
Viet Nam	3	3	29	20	61	19	0	0	93	42
Total	4	4	46	32	97	42	109	73	256	151

Total number of cases includes number of deaths.

WHO reports only laboratory-confirmed cases.

Source: World Health Organization

Production of Russian human bird flu vaccine set for spring

11 October 2006

A human vaccine against the H5N1 bird flu virus could start to be produced in Russia in the spring of 2007, a research center chief said Wednesday.

The deadly strain has claimed dozens of human lives since it first appeared in Asia in 2003, and it has since spread worldwide. Scientists fear the virus could mutate into a form transmissible between humans, sparking a global pandemic.



"Completing the full cycle of trials will take several months," Anton Katlinsky, who heads the Microgen center, which specializes in vaccine research, told a news conference. "Next spring, Russia will have a technologically tested pilot vaccine, whose commercial production could be launched any time."

Katlinsky said the first phase of clinical trials was successful. In June 2006, 240 volunteers, aged 18 to 50, were injected with two types of the vaccine. The OrniFlu vaccine proved the most effective, he said.

Further trials will also involve volunteers, who will receive financial compensation for the risk.

Katlinsky said researchers have developed proper vaccine production techniques and, commercial production could be started promptly in the event of a pandemic.

When the vaccine is completed, the first batch could be produced in seven and eight weeks' time, and demand for the vaccine could be met in full in 45 days' time, the researcher said.

Earlier reports said the vaccine is likely to be given mainly to people in high-risk groups, including poultry farm workers, hunters and veterinary workers.

This year, an epidemic of the deadly virus broke out in five Siberian and 11 southern regions, resulting in the deaths and culling of about 1.5 million birds. No human fatalities have been reported in Russia.

But Yelena Doroshenko, a department head at a flu research institute, said that six people died after pluming swans in April in Azerbaijan, which borders on Russia.

Doroshenko also said the available veterinary vaccine has proved effective.

"Vaccinated birds do not fall ill even after being infected with the highly pathogenic H5N1 strain in the lab. This reduces human infection risks," Doroshenko said.

A World Health Organization official also attending the news conference said research is vital. Marie-Paule Kieny, director of Initiative for Vaccine Research, said one to two million people died in the latest pandemic last century and warned that an outbreak of the disease among humans could result in massive casualties on the same scale.

Source: RIA Novosti

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WHO Western Pacific chief vows to make bird flu priority if elected director-general

October 12, 2006

Shigeru Omi of Japan, currently WHO's Western Pacific regional director, is among 13 candidates nominated by their countries to fill the top job after Director-General Lee Jong-wook died unexpectedly in May two years before his term was up.

A short list will be voted on next month in Geneva by the organization's executive board, and a final candidate will then be proposed to the World Health Assembly on Nov. 9.

The change comes at a time when the U.N. health agency is under increasing pressure to respond to global health threats and prepare the world for a possible pandemic that experts fear could spread rapidly around the world, killing millions and crippling economies.



"Pandemic preparedness is my first commitment," Omi told The Associated Press by phone from Sri Lanka, where he was campaigning this week. "The virus may change all of a sudden so that a human pandemic may happen. That's why we have to prepare ourselves for the worst -case scenario."

He said leaders and donors must not become fatigued with the message he's been preaching since the H5N1 bird flu virus began decimating poultry stocks across Asia in late 2003. Initially, many countries paid little attention to the threat, but after bird flu jumped from Asia to Europe and Africa, it became a top health priority.

The virus, which has killed at least 148 people globally, remains hard for people to catch but scientists fear it will mutate into a form that spreads easily among humans. So far, most cases have been linked to contact with infected birds. Omi said he would push donors to fulfill pledges totaling US\$1.9 billion (€1.5 billion) made in January to tackle bird flu and prepare for a possible pandemic. Last month, acting WHO chief Anders Nordstrom said the organization is still lacking about half the funds it needs to help countries in that fight.

Omi, 57, of Japan, who has worked at WHO for 16 years, says his experience in building consensus among countries and pushing WHO to work more closely with other key agencies, such as the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, makes him the best choice for the job. He has served as regional director since 1999 and was challenged in 2003 when SARS emerged in Asia and spread rapidly across the world, killing nearly 800 people and infecting more than 8,000 before it was stopped.

"The director-general of the World Health Organization, at this point, should go to somebody whose leadership has been tested and proven and whose track record speaks for itself," he said. Member states "feel very comfortable and they think that I can help this international community to go through a very, very difficult period."

Working to increase AIDS prevention and treatment and eradicating polio also are among Omi's top goals. He said using celebrities to increase public awareness and build momentum for fighting disease in poverty-stricken countries would be part of his strategy. Omi also wants countries to set up national plans to fight chronic killers such as diabetes and heart disease, and to help slim down nations facing obesity epidemics.

The other candidates are Margaret Chan, Hong Kong's former health director and a WHO point person on bird flu; Ecuador's outgoing president, Alfredo Palacio Gonzalez; French politician Bernard Kouchner; Kazem Behbehani, a senior WHO official from Kuwait; Julio Frenk, Mexico's health minister; David A. Gunnarsson, Iceland's health minister; Nay Htun, a former high-ranking U.N. development and environment official from Myanmar; Karam Karam, former Lebanese health minister; Elena Salgado Mendez, Spain's health minister; Manuel Mocumbi, former prime minister of Mozambique; Pekka Puska, head of Finland's national health institute; and Tomris Turmen, a Turkish woman who heads WHO's family health division.

Source: The Associated Press

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Combo Human-Bird Antibody May Ward Off Avian Flu

13 October 2006

"Humanized" bird flu antibodies could work as both vaccine and treatment during a major outbreak in people, a new study indicates.

Researchers reporting in the Oct. 12 issue of the open-access journal *Respiratory Research* say they've bioengineered antibodies that are active against H5N1 bird flu virus by attaching a portion of a related human antibody.



The work produced two different, so-called "humanized monoclonal" antibodies.

Mice who received the first type of antibodies via injection three days before being exposed to H5N1 were completely protected from the virus, say a team of researchers from the DSO National Laboratory in Singapore and St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tenn.



Higher doses of these antibodies were effective against the disease when given after infection, the researchers added.

The second antibody was less protective, working only when given in a high dose before infection.

"We have shown here the proof of principle that passive antibody therapy can be an effective tool for both prophylaxis against and treatment of highly pathogenic H5N1 influenza virus, providing the immediate immunity needed, which combined with social distancing could limit the transmission of H5N1 to others and contain a future influenza pandemic," the researchers said.

Other experts were only cautiously optimistic.

Proof of principle is fine, said Dr. John Treanor, a professor of medicine, microbiology and immunology at the University of Rochester, but lots of different things need to be done to put the findings to practical use.

"You could look at different animal models," Treanor said. "You could make additional monoclonal antibodies. You could make a mixture of antibodies. All of this would be interesting and would help to define the situation better."

But ultimately, he said, "what you really need to do is to take some product like this monoclonal antibody, find people with H5N1 influenza and see if it made them better."

Such a test might be difficult to arrange. Only a few hundred people are known to have been infected with avian flu.

The most important thing to be done now, said Richard J. Webby, an American member of the research team, is to look at different strains of the H5N1 virus.

The biggest limitation of the humanized antibody is that "it recognizes only a small portion of the virus," said Webby, who works at St. Jude. "If the virus changes only a little bit, it might not be effective. We have to look at how this antibody works against the variants that are out there in Africa and the Middle East."

The researchers will be working with different animal models other than the mouse, Webby said. They also will work on large-scale production of the humanized antibody.

The idea of humanizing animal antibodies isn't new, Treanor said. One such antibody is on the market to protect high-risk infants against respiratory syncytial virus, an infection of the lungs and breathing passages.

Treanor led a trial of a standard vaccine against bird flu, financed by the U.S. National Institutes of Health. "We tested an inactivated vaccine," he said. "The finding was that the vaccine would work, but you would have to give a very high dose."



If the humanized antibody now being reported is found to work in humans, "it would be a bit cleaner and easier to deal with," Treanor said.

The World Health Organization is now testing a different approach to avian flu vaccination, a vaccine that contains part of the H5N1 virus and an adjuvant, an additive that increases effectiveness.

In related news, a team from the University of Rochester Medical Center -- led by Treanor -- said that an initial priming shot, given in advance of a "booster" shot, might help shield people against the bird flu virus.

The researchers focused on 37 people from Hong Kong. All had received two shots of vaccine as part of a 1998 study -- a response to an outbreak in poultry that had occurred there that year.

Earlier in 2006, the researchers gave these individuals a new vaccine, this time formulated to fight new strains that had emerged in 2004-2005.

Compared to people who received their very first experimental bird flu shot in 2005, those who had already gotten vaccine in 1998 were twice as likely to develop protective antibodies to the H5N1 virus, Treanor's group reported.

"If the findings hold up, then it might open up a number of options beneficial for planning," Treanor said in a prepared statement. "One might consider giving a priming shot to members of the community who would be a central part of the response if a pandemic were to occur, such as health care workers," he said.

The findings were presented Thursday at the annual meeting of the Infectious Diseases Society of America.

Source: Forbes - NY,USA

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Viet Nam tightens bird flu controls for rest of 2006

13 October 2006



Breeders at a chicken farm in Dong Anh district, Ha Noi, use an anti-bird flu chemical. — VNA/VNS Photo Bui Tuong

HA NOI — Viet Nam has been bird flu free over the first nine months of the year. But the country's future successful control of the pandemic will depend largely on the country's efforts over the remaining three months, said Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Bui Ba Bong.

Members of the National Steering Committee for Bird Flu Control have again urged caution as winter looms. Research has shown that cool air is a major contributor to the virus spreading quickly through poultry and water bird flocks.

Nguyen Dang Vang, director of the Animal Breeding Department, said that breeding was again on the increase as farmers try to match demand brought on by the upcoming wedding season and the Tet (Lunar New Year) holiday. The increased demand for poultry coupled with the recent foot and mouth outbreaks in cattle have driven the price for chicken products upward.

Vang said the price of one kilogram of processed chicken was between VND60,000-VND70,000 in Ha Noi. This is great news for poultry breeders but a challenge for those charged with epidemic control.



In Ha Tay Province, where the country's leading poultry industry is located, animal health workers still maintain a 24 hour vigil at 322 communes out of the 14 towns and districts where poultry are raised.

The provincial authorities have been aggressive in their efforts to control the disease, having recently spent VND1 billion for developing quarantine systems. The province has also budgeted for another VND1 billion to be spent this year. The Animal Health Department has also continued its efforts by organising training courses on biological safety for poultry breeders and launching campaigns to vaccinate poultry and clear environment.

Nguyen Thi Lien, a breeder in Chuong My District, said her family members were very worried when a bird suddenly died at her farm. "We invited an animal health worker to our house to guide us on the best approach to deal with the virus. When we discover unusual symptoms in our herd, we have the training and knowledge to solve the problem," said Lien. — VNS

Source: Viet Nam News - Hanoi, Vietnam

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Indonesia confirms 55th bird flu death

October 17, 2006

The death toll in Indonesia from bird flu rose to 55 on Tuesday after officials confirmed that a 27-year-old woman who died last week was infected with the virus.

The death is the third to be confirmed in two days in Indonesia, which is grappling with the world's highest number of deaths from avian influenza.

"Both tests showed her to be positively infected with the bird flu virus, making her the 55th fatal casualty" in Indonesia, said Tontro, an official at the health ministry's national bird flu information centre.

Positive results from two Indonesian laboratories mean that the World Health Organisation (WHO) includes the case in its records.

The woman from Central Java province, identified by the centre as Mistiyem, developed symptoms on October 8 and was hospitalised on October 12. She died a day later, according to a statement posted on the WHO website.

The WHO said the source of her exposure to the virus was currently under investigation.

The vast majority of cases in the archipelago nation have been spread by contact with infected poultry, though several cases of limited human-to-human transmission have also occurred here.

More human cases of the virus—72 have now been reported in Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous nation—increase the possibility of the H5N1 virus mutating to become easily transmissible among people.

Scientists fear that this could lead to a global flu pandemic with a potential death toll of millions.

On Monday, the health ministry confirmed the deaths of a 67-year-old woman who died in West Java's Bandung late on Sunday and an 11-year-old boy, who died in Jakarta on Saturday.

Both were believed to have had contact with poultry before they died, the WHO statement said.

Health officials said that the woman had been suffering from encephalitis, or inflammation of the brain, believed to be caused by the virus and the first case of its type in Indonesia.



The UN's senior bird flu official appealed to international donors last month to speed up the disbursement of promised aid to Indonesia to help it fight the spread of H5N1 among the population.

Officials in Jakarta have said they need around 250 million dollars a year for the next three years to effectively combat the virus, but next to no funds have arrived since donors pledged millions at a conference in Beijing this year.

Critics have charged that the country, which was accused of initially covering up outbreaks, has been slow to fight bird flu.

Source: Agence France-Presse

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New bird flu restrictions come into force in Switzerland

October 15, 2006



Some poultry will stay locked up over the winter (Keystone Archive)

Poultry kept within a one-kilometre radius of major Swiss lakes and rivers must stay indoors from Sunday as part of targeted preventive measures against avian flu.

The restrictions, imposed by the economics ministry, are designed to prevent domestic flocks from coming into contact with migratory birds infected with the H5N1 virus.

The measures will remain in place until April 30 next year and could be reinforced should the need arise. The outdoor ban applies to poultry holdings near around 20 lakes and rivers in low-lying areas.

Thirty-two dead wild birds were found with the H5N1 virus in Switzerland in February and March, mainly around lakes. As a result the Swiss authorities ordered poultry to be locked up from February 20 to May 1. No new cases have been detected in Switzerland since April.

The economics ministry says monitoring of wild birds will continue, especially on lakes Geneva, Constance, Neuchâtel and Zurich where 74 per cent of waterfowl spend the winter.

Switzerland's summertime waterfowl population of 50,000 swells to 500,000 during the winter migration to Africa.

Birds tested

Throughout the winter, samples will be taken from live birds on lakes Constance and Sempach and at the Bolle di Magadino nature reserve in canton Ticino. Similar checks will be carried out on birds shot by hunters on lakes Geneva and Neuchâtel.

As was the case last year, all suspect birds found across Switzerland will be analysed by the authorities.

"The period of vigilance will not be limited to periods of migration, but throughout the winter," said the ministry when it announced the restrictions at the end of last month.

The new measures will affect about 1,000 of the country's 17,000 large poultry farms and 4,000 smaller holdings, say officials.



Poultry markets

In addition to the outdoor ban on chickens, ducks, geese and ostriches, poultry markets and exhibitions will be prohibited within the exclusion zone.

Checks will be maintained at the country's borders and all imports from countries affected by bird flu remain banned.

Both the Swiss Farmers Union and Kagfreiland, a farm animal protection organisation, have backed the targeted measures.

Most European Union countries have relaxed restrictions requiring poultry to be kept indoors but say they are ready to act should risk levels increase. Switzerland is not a member of the EU.

The Geneva-based World Health Organization remains on a state of pandemic alert as deaths from the human form of bird flu continue to climb. On Sunday the Indonesian authorities announced that an 11-year-old boy had died from bird flu, raising the national death toll from the disease to 53.

Source: Swissinfo - Switzerland

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Influenza Roundup (News Links)

Tuesday, October 17, 2006

SEASONAL FLU

[Superior relative efficacy of live attenuated influenza vaccine compared with inactivated influenza vaccine in young children with recurrent respiratory tract infections](#)

From Oct Ped Infect Dis J [Visit link...](#)

[Annual influenza vaccination in community-dwelling elderly individuals and the risk of lower respiratory tract infections or pneumonia](#)

From Oct 9 Arch Intern Med [Visit link...](#)

[Comparison of the efficacy and safety of live attenuated cold-adapted influenza vaccine, trivalent, with trivalent inactivated influenza virus vaccine in children and adolescents with asthma](#)

From Oct Ped Infect Dis J [Visit link...](#)

AVIAN/PANDEMIC FLU

[Susceptibility of North American ducks and gulls to H5N1 highly pathogenic avian influenza viruses](#)

From Emerg Infect Dis, published online Oct 13 [Visit link...](#)

Influenza

[Avian influenza H5N1 screening of intensive care unit patients with community-acquired pneumonia](#)

From Emerg Infect Dis, published online Oct 5 [Visit link...](#)

[Pigs, cats in Indonesia infected with H5N1](#)

Pigs and stray cats have been found infected with the H5N1 avian influenza virus in Indonesia, adding to the few previous reports of such cases, according to news services. [Read article...](#)

[Avian influenza and US TV news \(Letter\)](#)

From Emerg Infect Dis, published online Oct 13 [Visit link...](#)

[Fatal avian influenza A H5N1 in a dog](#)

From Emerg Infect Dis, published online Oct 10 [Visit link...](#)



[A cure for the Asian flu \(Commentary\)](#)

From Sep Biosecurity Bioterrorism (PDF) [Visit link...](#)

[Knowledge, attitudes, and practices of avian influenza, poultry workers, Italy](#)

From Emerg Infect Dis, published online Oct 13 [Visit link...](#)

[Passive immunoprophylaxis and therapy with humanized monoclonal antibody specific for influenza A H5 hemagglutinin in mice](#)

From Respiratory Res, published online Oct 14 [Visit link...](#)

[Bellagio Statement of Principles on Social Justice and Pandemic Planning](#)

Released Sep 28 [Visit link...](#)

[Priority setting for pandemic influenza: an analysis of national preparedness plans](#)

From Oct PLoS Med, published online Oct 17 [Visit link...](#)

[Protective immunity to lethal challenge of the 1918 pandemic influenza virus by vaccination](#)

From Proc Natl Acad Sci, published online Oct 16 [Visit link...](#)

[Disease mitigation measures in the control of pandemic influenza](#)

From Dec Biosecurity Bioterrorism, early online publication (PDF) [Visit link...](#)

[Targeted social distancing design for pandemic influenza](#)

From Emerg Infect Dis, published online Oct 6 [Visit link...](#)

[Personal \(nonpharmaceutical\) protective measures for reducing transmission of influenza--ECDC interim recommendations](#)

From Oct 12 Eurosurveillance Weekly [Visit link...](#)

[Inhibition of influenza virus infection by a novel antiviral peptide that targets viral attachment to cells](#)

From J Virol, published online Sep 27 [Visit link...](#)

Source: Center for Infectious Disease Research & Policy

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