

QUARTERLY REVIEW (SEPTEMBER – DECEMBER 2006)**September**

- 2nd The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced that a low pathogenic (LPAI) form of H5N1 avian influenza has been found in fecal samples taken from wild birds in Maryland and in Pennsylvania. Testing has ruled out the possibility of this being the highly pathogenic H5N1 strain that has spread through birds in Asia, Europe, and Africa. Officials stress that the strain is of no risk to humans.
- 5th The world is in danger of missing targets for providing clean water and sanitation unless there is a dramatic increase in the pace of work and investment between now and 2015, according to a report from the WHO and UNICEF. The situation is becoming particularly acute in urban areas, where rapid population growth is putting great pressure on the provision of services and the health of poor people
- 8th Experts gathered at the 10th International Conference on Obesity in Sydney, Australia warned that “obesity is a bigger threat than AIDS or bird flu, and will easily overwhelm the world’s health systems if urgent action is not taken”.
- 14th The U.S. CDC and FDA issued an alert to consumers in multiple states about an outbreak of *E. coli* O157:H7 linked to consumption of fresh spinach. Since the initial outbreak 26 states with 204 cases of confirmed illnesses, 104 hospitalizations, and three deaths due to *E. coli* O157:H7 infection have been reported to the CDC.
- 22nd Merck & Co., Inc. and the Nicaraguan Ministry of Health announced plans to conduct a joint project aimed to demonstrate the public health impact of implementing a full rotavirus vaccination program in Nicaragua. Through this project, all infants born in Nicaragua in a three-year period will receive free doses of ROTATEQ[®].
- 26th The UK Department of Health received the final shipment of its stockpile of Tamiflu[®] from Roche Pharmaceuticals. Roche is predicting that its increased manufacturing capacity will allow the company to meet the pandemic orders for Tamiflu[®] for a total of 75 countries by mid-2007.

October

- 4th Ethiopia reported a total of 22,101 cases and 219 deaths, a case fatality rate (CFR) of 1.0%, from Acute watery diarrhoeal syndrome. Ongoing flooding had affected seven of Ethiopia’s nine regions and displaced many people. Amhara, the region severely affected by floods, had a CFR of 10%.
- 6th Thailand is launching a campaign to educate school-age children about how to avoid contracting H5N1. Thailand has been one of the regions hardest hit by H5N1, with at least 17 confirmed fatal human cases; according to AFP, 11 of those fatalities have been children under the age of 18.

- 12th The world's success in eradicating polio officially depends on four countries – Afghanistan, India, Nigeria, and Pakistan – said the Advisory Committee on Polio Eradication (ACPE), the independent oversight body of the eradication effort at the WHO. The ACPE advised the four polio-endemic countries to set realistic target dates for stopping transmission, noting that these countries will take more than 12 months to end polio.
- 17th Chinese health official states that AIDS in China has spread beyond high risk groups such as injecting drug users, prostitutes and homosexuals and the country is becoming "like Africa" in how the virus is transmitted. There are over 190 new HIV infections every day and one percent of all pregnant women are infected; it is now considered a generalized epidemic.
- 23rd The WHO issued a Global Pandemic Influenza Action Plan to Increase Vaccine Supply. The action plan has developed in response to a May 2005 resolution by the 58th World Health Assembly, which called for WHO to “seek solutions with international and national partners, including the private sector, to reduce the present global shortage of influenza vaccines” by “look[ing] at strategies for economizing on the use of antigen and transferring production technologies from industrialized to developing countries.
- 26th The WHO and a group of more than 25 partner organizations unveiled a new strategy to fight some of the most neglected tropical diseases. The approach contained in a newly published manual, *Preventive Chemotherapy in Human Helminthiasis*, focuses on how and when a set of low-cost or free drugs should be used in developing countries to control a set of diseases caused by worm infections.
- 30th A paper recently published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS)* describes the emergence of a new sublineage of the H5N1 virus in Southern China. The new variant, although widespread, doesn't indicate any increased risk for people. Results from serological analyses suggest that the Fujian-like virus may have gained predominance as a result of China's compulsory program of vaccinating poultry.

November

- 1st Unsafe sex is the second most important cause of illness and death in developing countries and ninth in developed nations, according to a report published by the WHO. The first-ever global study of sexual and reproductive health, states that declining financial support and increased political interference are making matters worse.
- 8th Taiwan has responded to bird flu fears by starting work on its own version of the anti-viral drug, Tamiflu[®], without waiting for the manufacturer's consent. Taiwan officials said they had applied for the right to copy Tamiflu[®] - but the priority was to protect the public.
- 9th Dr. Margaret Chan of China was elected the next Director-General of the World Health Organization. After her appointment, she told the World Health Assembly she wanted to be judged by the impact WHO's work has on the people of Africa and on women across the globe.
- 16th A group of scientists at the University of Tokyo's Institute of Medical Science discovered two spots on the H5N1 bird flu virus that need to mutate for the virus to infect people more

easily. The virus has surface proteins that bind more easily to receptors lining the respiratory tracts of birds, rather than receptors in humans. Experts fear the H5N1 virus will infect more humans and trigger a pandemic killing millions of people if it mutates to attach easily to human receptors.

- 17th The teen birth rate in the United States fell to its lowest level ever in 2005, according to a report released by the CDC. Between 2004 and 2005, the birth rate for teenagers aged 15-19 fell 2 percent, to 40.4 births per 1,000 – a 35 percent decrease from the peak of 61.8 births per 1,000 in 1991.
- 21st The United Nations says countries attempting to counter terrorism should first improve their public health services. U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said, “terrorism must be addressed through responses encompassing public health and disaster relief efforts in order to ensure biological science and technology safely reach their potential...”

December

- 1st The 18th annual World AIDS Day, with the theme, “Accountability,” was marked globally as an estimated 40 million people worldwide continued to suffer from the disease.
- 5th New York City became the first American city to ban all restaurants from using artificial trans fats – food ingredients that have been found to dangerously elevate cholesterol levels.
- 6th The World Bank called for an additional \$1.5 billion to fight avian flu. One-third of the funds are to be directed to sub-Saharan Africa during the next few years. In 2006, \$96 million was spent on bird flu prevention in Africa.
- 12th The introduction of new vaccines against human papillomavirus (HPV), the virus that causes cervical cancer, could have a major impact on the health of women in the developing world. More than 250,000 women died from cervical cancer in 2005 - the vast majority in developing countries.
- 14th Global measures to combat malaria are discussed at a summit held at the White House in Washington, D.C. The summit comes a day after the World Bank announced it would lend \$180 million to help African countries - especially Nigeria - fight the disease.
- 16th The problem of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis may be even more severe than previously thought, experts warn. A survey of 79 countries by the WHO published in *The Lancet* found TB drug resistance in virtually every one. Particularly high levels of resistance were seen in regions of the former Soviet Union and parts of China.
- 22nd A global flu pandemic could kill 62 million people, experts have warned. The 1918 pandemic claimed 50 million lives, and experts in *The Lancet* predict the toll today would be higher than this, despite medical advances. The world's poorest nations would be hardest hit, fuelled by factors such as HIV and malaria infections, the Harvard University researchers believe.

Sources: The World Health Organization (WHO), the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), the U.S. Department of State, Council on Foreign

Relations, *Science*, *China Daily*, *The Lancet*, The Associated Press, Reuters, Voice of America, the United Nations (UN), Agence France Presse (AFP), BBC news, Business wire, United Press International, The Dow Jones Business News.