



Newsletter

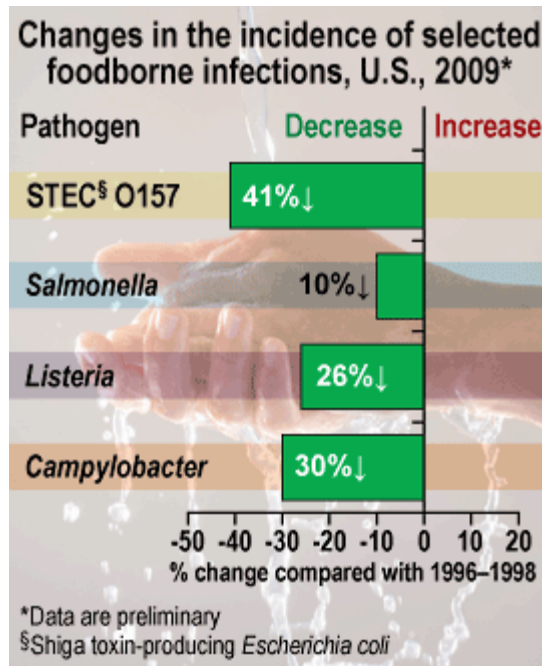
Date: Wednesday, December 22, 2010



House sends food safety bill to president December 21, 2010

A major food safety bill designed to boost contamination prevention efforts all along the food chain cleared the last of many legislative hurdles today with a 215-144 vote in the House, sending it to President Obama for his promised signature.

<http://www.cidrap.umn.edu/cidrap/content/fs/food-disease/news/dec2110passage.html>



Graph provided by CDC

Incidence of Foodborne Illness, 2009

During this holiday season, CDC is highlighting foodborne illness data. Whether attending or hosting parties, please keep food safety in mind.

The Foodborne Diseases Active Surveillance Network (FoodNet) is the principal foodborne disease component of CDC's Emerging Infections Program Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Maryland, Minnesota, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, and Tennessee), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).
www.cdc.com

Current Influenza Activity

Ohio: During week 49 (December 5-11, 2010) Ohio has sporadic flu activity. Public health surveillance data sources indicate minimal activity for influenza-like illness in outpatient settings reported by Ohio's sentinel providers. The percentage of emergency department visits with patients exhibiting constitutional symptoms, as well as thermometer sales continues to remain at or below baseline levels statewide. Ten influenza-associated hospitalizations were reported: one in the Northeast, one in the Central, one in the West Central, three in the Northwest, and four in the East Central region.



German doctors declare "cure" in HIV patient

Wed, Dec 15 2010

By [Maggie Fox](#), Health and Science Editor

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - German researchers who used a bone marrow transplant to treat a cancer patient with the AIDS virus, have declared him cured of the virus -- a stunning claim in a field where the word "cure" is barely whispered.

The patient, who had both HIV infection and leukemia, received the bone marrow transplant in 2007 from a donor who had a genetic mutation known to give patients a natural immunity to the virus.

Nearly four years after the transplant, the patient is free of the virus and it does not appear to be hiding anywhere in his body, Thomas Schneider of Berlin Charite hospital and colleagues said.

"Our results strongly suggest that cure of HIV has been achieved in this patient," they wrote in the journal *Blood*.

AIDS researchers have rejected the approach on any kind of scale for patients with HIV. A bone marrow transplant is a last-ditch treatment for cancers such as leukemia.

It requires destruction of a patient's own bone marrow -- itself a harrowing process -- and then a transplant from a donor who has a near-exact blood and immune system type. Months of recovery are needed while the transplant grows and reconstitutes the patient's immune system.

"It's not practical and it can kill people," said Dr. Robert Gallo of the Institute of Human Virology at the University of Maryland, who helped discover the human immunodeficiency virus that causes AIDS.

"It is possibly a cure, that's for sure, you won't know for absolute sure until the person dies and undergoes extreme PCR (genetic) analysis of post-mortem tissue."

The mutation affects a receptor, a cellular doorway, called CCR5, that the AIDS virus uses to get into the cells it infects.

Since the 1990s scientists have known that some people, mostly of Northern European descent, have the mutation and are rarely infected with HIV.

"They are uninfected, virtually," Gallo said.

Some researchers are working on the idea of gene therapy to treat or try to cure HIV, but the technology is still in experimental stages.

"I don't want to throw cold water on an interesting thing, but that's what it is -- an interesting thing," Gallo said.

Schneider's team has been following the patient, taking samples from his colon, liver, spinal fluid and brain as he developed various conditions that justified the tests. They tested all these samples for evidence of the virus, which can be difficult to detect unless it is actively infecting cells.

All these places are suspected "reservoirs" where HIV can hide out for years, to rebound in patients who stop taking drugs that suppress the infection.

This patient appears to have a fully functioning immune system, they found, which appears genetically identical to cells from the donor -- not the patient's own immune cells.

Schneider's team found no evidence of HIV anywhere.

"From these results, it is reasonable to conclude that cure of HIV infection has been achieved in this patient," they wrote.

The AIDS virus infects 33 million people globally and has killed more than 25 million since the pandemic began in the 1980s. Cocktails of strong drugs can suppress the virus, keeping patients healthy and reducing the chance they will infect others, but there is no vaccine.

www.reuters.com

National Association of County and City Health Officials

Beyond Funny Pages and Superheroes: Comics for Preparedness Education

When staff from the Seattle & King County Advanced Practice Center first approached other colleagues in their department about the idea of doing a comic book about pandemic influenza, some were skeptical. “How could anyone take a pandemic seriously if it’s done as a comic book?” they wondered.

Flash-forward three years, and *No Ordinary Flu*, the pan-flu comic book they created, is the top requested material on NACCHO’s APC website. “We were confident that it would be an effective outreach tool for diverse populations,” explained Seattle & King County APC Manager Carina Elsenboss. “Audience research with immigrant and African American communities indicated that these communities preferred pictorial communications, and we learned that comics are popular among all ages in many Latin American and Asian countries.”

No Ordinary Flu depicts the story of one family during the 1918 influenza pandemic, and shows what their descendants are doing to prepare for a future pandemic. By illustrating how a severe pandemic might unfold, the comic aims to help readers “mentally rehearse” what it might be like and why measures such as social distancing might be necessary. Illustrations also make it easier for people with lower health literacy levels to understand complex concepts, such as how flu virus spreads.

“Another benefit of the comic’s medium is that it’s more visually appealing than other types of fact sheets,” observed Meredith Li-Vollmer, a risk communication specialist who wrote the comic. “Which would you rather read if you were stuck in a clinic waiting room—another text brochure, or a comic book?”

Since comics rely on a combination of text and illustrations to convey meaning, the word count is relatively low, making translation less expensive. *No Ordinary Flu* was originally translated into 11 languages. The comic book was warmly received by many immigrant groups who do not often receive health information in their first languages. As a result, agencies who work with diverse language groups requested additional translations and the comic book is now available in 22 languages.

The success of *No Ordinary Flu* has prompted the Seattle & King County APC to develop more public health preparedness materials using the

comic’s format. These include a short information sheet using a comic-strip style to help the general public understand what to expect at an alternate care facility. During the H1N1 outbreak, a comic strip taught parents why it’s important to keep kids at home when sick. Most recently, the Seattle & King County APC team completed three full comic books telling the real-life stories of individuals who have lived through catastrophic disasters under the series title “Survivor Tales.”

The comic strip is attached to the e-mail

<http://apc.naccho.org>

Reuters Health Overweight Rates by County

Click on the link below to find the percentage of adults with a BMI >25 by country.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/interactive/idUSTRE6B82I20101209?view=large&type=newsOne>

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