



### **RVF Strikes the Middle East**

For the first time in 70 years, cases of potentially deadly Rift Valley Fever (RVF) have been reported outside traditionally affected areas in North and sub-Saharan Africa.

The World Health Organization (WHO) reported in late September that laboratory analyses at the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) had confirmed the diagnosis in patients in Saudi Arabia and the bordering nation of Yemen. WHO officials said 160 cases, including 33 deaths, of suspected RVF had been reported in Saudi Arabia and 134 suspected cases, including 31 deaths, were reported in Yemen. The outbreaks raise a threat that RVF could spread to other parts of Asia and Europe because many species of mosquitoes are vectors for the RVF virus, a member of the genus *Phlebovirus*.

In Saudi Arabia and Yemen, experts from WHO, CDC, the United Nations, and the National Institute of Virology in South Africa are aiding local governments in conducting field investigations, educating the public about RVF, and treating patients with the antiviral drug ribavirin. The disease was first isolated in 1930 during an epidemic among sheep in Kenya's Rift Valley. In humans the illness is usually mild. However, in patients who develop hemorrhagic fever, the mortality rate from RVF is about 50%.

### **Breast Cancer in Europe**

Participants at the Second European Breast Cancer Conference called on nations throughout Europe to establish accredited breast care programs that stress the importance of collaboration among surgeons, radiologists, pathologists, psychologists, and other professionals involved in women's health care.

At the end of the conference, which was held in Brussels in September, more than 3000 participants used a computerized voting system to establish goals

that are contained in a document called the *Brussels Statement* (available at <http://www.fecss.be/ebcc2statement.html>). The document sets an agenda for three major groups: the Breast Cancer Group of the European Organization for Research and Treatment in Cancer; the European Society of Mastology; and Europa Donna, the European Breast Cancer Coalition.

In addition to calling for multidisciplinary, accredited breast care programs, conference participants also asked that breast cancer incidence and mortality data collected by the programs be entered into a common European database. Additional recommendations include the provision of high-quality mammography screening to all European women aged 50 to 75 and increased government support for clinical trials of breast cancer therapies.

### **Translating HIV Care**

A new Internet resource will bring Russian-language information on the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS to health care professionals in the New Independent States (NIS) of the former Soviet Union.

The Eurasia AIDS Knowledge Network is intended to provide comprehensive information on basic and cutting-edge treatments for patients with HIV/AIDS. The network is a collaborative project of the American International Health Alliance (AIHA) in Washington, DC, and Chicago-based Medical Advocates for Social Justice.

"Many physicians and other health care professionals in the global community cannot access [HIV/AIDS] data because they are not fluent in English, a factor that cannot be a litmus test for access to medical data," said Gordon Nary, executive director of Medical Advocates.

The initial translations will focus on infection control and postexposure prophylaxis for health care professionals. Network features also will include current data on the prevention of mother-

to-child transmission. Treatment guidelines, updates on the prevention and treatment of HIV-related opportunistic infections, and data on antiretroviral and immune system-enhancing strategies will be incorporated into the network's offerings during the next 2 years.

For more information, see the AIHA Web site at <http://www.aiha.com> or the Medical Advocates site at <http://www.medadvocates.org>.

### **Osteoporosis Goes Unnoticed**

Osteoporosis may remain undiagnosed and untreated in a large proportion of older Canadians who already have suffered an initial fracture associated with fragile bones, according to a new study.

Even though osteoporosis is difficult to detect before a fracture, researchers at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, and the University of Toronto surveyed patients who had been treated for a first fracture attributed to weakened bones. The study included 108 patients—96 women and 12 men with a mean age of 64 years—treated at three Ontario community hospitals.

In the October *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, the researchers reported that only 19% of the patients had been diagnosed with osteoporosis before their hospital visit or within 1 year afterward. All who had been diagnosed were postmenopausal women; most were advised to take calcium supplements and about half had been told to take supplements of vitamin D. Of those diagnosed, 40% were taking hormone replacement therapy (HRT) and 40% were taking bisphosphonates.

Of the 81% who had not been diagnosed with osteoporosis, 5% were taking HRT and none was taking bisphosphonates. Fewer than 20% had been advised to take calcium or vitamin D supplements. The findings show a clear deficiency in the management of patients with osteoporosis, the authors wrote.—Rebecca Voelker