BGTHA
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Concern in Vietnam as rising number of patients diagnosed with severe Meningococcal Meningitis

https://tienphong.vn/nhieu-benh-nhan-viem-mang-nao-do-nao-mo-cau-dien-bien-nang-post1813182.amp?_x_tr_sl=vi&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=en-US

Infection with the Meningococcal bacteria can take many forms but it is always a major medical catastrophe with many differing presentations. The report from Bach Mai in Hanoi emphasises the necessity for a rapid diagnosis and early medical intervention as the mortality rate can be over 50% within 24 hours if delayed. The widespread use of the meningococcal vaccines has made a significant difference in many regions of the world but, despite this success, disease breakthrough is always possible as was seen in a UK nursery outbreak which was reported just recently through Eurosurveillance https://doi.org/10.2807/1560-7917.ES.2026.31.3.2500431

Suspected food poisoning at wedding haldi function in Maharashtra (India) sickens up to 125 guests

https://www.oneindia.com/india/thane-125-guests-suffer-suspected-food-poisoning-at-haldi-ceremony-7972121.html

As any professional cook will tell you preparing food for mass gatherings and keeping it safe for consumption is always a major task. Any failure in the food delivery chain can lead to serious consequences. Sometimes the food is not prepared on-site but rather transported across the city from a different location and handled by many different individuals so maintenance of the required hygiene is constantly under threat. It may be very sensible that we should advise our patients to take special care when attending any mass gatherings (e.g. wedding feasts etc) and frequently it may be a good option for them to bring along safe snacks to sustain then and to keep them from eating foods which may be somewhat suspect.

Strongyloidiasis in recipients organ transplant identified in the Canary Islands (Spain)

https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/32/1/25-1483_article#suggestedcitation

I think it is fair to say that we would not be suspecting that this rather nasty nematode (round worm) infection would be a problem in one of our close neighbouring countries. However Strongyloidiasis has a in-built ability to 'auto-infect' as free living larva within the intestine can penetrate through and maintain their life cycle for many decades. In fact up until the early 1990's I was seeing patients who had been infected from their miserable exposure while building the Bridge over the River Kwai during the 2nd World War, 50 years previously. These poor individuals were living with prolonged Strongyloidiasis which affected them in differing ways but most frequently with undiagnosed patches of urticaria which would come and go but cause a very uncomfortable irritation. One major concern for those with this chronic disease is that if they are immune suppressed for any reason (starting a course of steroids for airways obstruction, immune altering medications for rheumatoid arthritis or HIV etc) then the motile larva can too easily penetrate through the bowel into the vascular system and cause a serious and potentially fatal septicaemia and spread to the brain and other regions of those affected. In this report from the Canary Islands the two infected individuals received a renal transplant from the same donor (who had lived in Spain for 20+ years). It is cases like this which may be used to widen the screening protocols for all donor tissue.

Public alert issued in Alberta (Canada) as cases of Measles rise

https://edmontonjournal.com/news/local-news/alberta-measles-cases-on-the-rise-as-exposure-at-an-edmonton-hospital-prompts-public-alert

Measles is always regarded as one of the world's most infectious diseases and too frequently it may not be a mild innoxious illness but rather one with very severe and even fatal consequences. Vaccination against measles has been under attack for many years but, despite a multitude of scientific programmes which have been made available to lessen the flood of anti-vax propaganda, it is still an uphill battle. The outpouring of 'Social Media' has fuelled the disinformation epidemic and frequently we are seeing the effects as cases explode throughout the world. See below for some linked to current outbreaks. We humans have such a poor memory recall and our forgetfulness is having really serious consequences. The old adage "*a lie travels halfway around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes*" or "*Falsehood flies, and truth comes limping after it; so that when men come to be undeceived, it is too late; the jest is over, and the tale has had its effect"* is unfortunately all so true. In the USA the fear is that they are moving so quickly towards the loss of their 'measles free' category you just have to wonder what is required for any level of commonsense to take hold.

Measles alert issued in Guatemala as cases in neighbouring countries rise

https://www.breakingbelizenews.com/2026/01/15/ministry-of-health-issues-alert-over-measles-outbreak-in-guatemala/

Measles alert issued in Sydney (Australia) after 11 recent cases reported

https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15483213/Sydney-measles-outbreak.html

Over 7000 cases of Measles reported in Mexico over the past 12 months

https://www.eluniversalhidalgo.com.mx/estado/brote-de-sarampion-alcanza-7-mil-131-casos-confirmados-en-mexico-ssa-aplica-mas-de-118-millones-de-vacunas-en-2025-y-2026/?outputType=Amp

Cases of Measles in South Carolina said to be 'soaring' with 88 new cases reported in past week

https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/south-carolina-measles-outbreak-surpasses-texas-vaccines-rcna256030

11month old infant in Jerusalem ICU with severe Measles

https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/unvaccinated-baby-in-jerusalem-in-critical-condition-after-contracting-measles/

Measles cases among the unvaccinated population in the Rio Negro region of Uruguay

https://www.montevideo.com.uy/Modo-saludable/Jerarca-de-MSP-confirma-que-sarampion-en-Uruguay-es-por-una-comunidad-que-no-se-vacuno--uc947302

Psittacosis risk associated with on-line purchase of parrots in Zhejiang Province (China)
https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/microbiology/articles/10.3389/fmicb.2026.1777495/abstract
This bacterial disease, typically known as parrot fever or ornithosis, mainly causes respiratory symptoms which can range from being very mild to being very severe. It has been identified in 100 bird species but the Chlamydia_psittaci is typically associated with parakeets, parrots, and cockatiels but other avian species (turkeys, ducks, pigeons and pheasants) can also be involved in the human transmission cycle. When faced with a patient experiencing a nasty cough and when taking the history it is always sensible to ask if the individual has any bird contact and, if so, the differential diagnosis should include Psittacosis but not forgetting Pontiac Fever and other less common causes. This is where the initial history taking becomes such an essential element of dealing with our patients and hopefully helps us to avoid the multitude of tests carried out as a blanket approach to making a diagnosis!

Visceral Leishmaniasis identified in dogs in Costa Rica
https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/veterinary-science/articles/10.3389/fvets.2025.1704403/full
The reason for including this veterinarian report is to remind us all that Leishmaniasis (a sandfly bite disease) is a zoonosis but humans can very easily become infected. If the disease is identified within animals in a region of the world then we humans are also as risk as the pesky female sandfly's don't have preference where they obtain their blood meal.

Report on Rabies in pet animals in Vientiane region (Laos)
https://wahis.woah.org/#/in-review/7219?reportId=179989
We hear quite frequently from our patients that they were licked or scratched by an animal overseas but, as it was a family pet (or the family said it was fully vaccinated), they don't feel that there is any risk to be concerned about. Fundamentally that is just a choice which is not a sensible option and in that situation having the correct WHO approved post exposure vaccine is definitely worth following. With correct post exposure treatment the risk shrinks to almost zero. However otherwise, without treatment, the potential for a miserably delayed presentation of the disease is left hanging.

Yellow Fever alert issued in Bogota (Colombia)
https://www.elpais.com.co/colombia/alerta-en-bogota-por-brotes-de-fiebre-amarilla-2534.html
These three deaths from Yellow Fever in Bogota has lead to this latest public health alert. It appears that in each case the disease was likely contracted away from the city in different regions of the country and that they just moved to the capital for better medical attention once their symptoms started. In Bogota at 2640m above sea level the risk of any of the mosquito borne diseases is of course minimal but at lower altitudes, where the mosquitoes abound, then patients with yellow fever (and other arboviral infections e.g. Dengue, Chikungunya, Zika etc) should really be nursed under mosquito nets to lessen the chance of local transmission.

New cases of Leprosy continue to be identified in Kenya
https://eastleighvoice.co.ke/health/279644/kenyas-silent-struggle-leprosy-cases-still-emerging-decades-after-elimination
Hanson's Disease (aka Leprosy) is frequently thought of as a historic illness with little relevance to 21st century medicine. However with reports like this it just shows that ancient diseases can still cause problems may decades later. Leprosy is a mycobacterium and prefers to live in the cooler regions of the body and so it is not a disease of the inner organs. It affects individuals in different ways depending on their personal immune response. For those with a solid immunity the risk of contracting the disease is minimal but if an individual with a lowered immunity is exposed then infection can occur. The incubation period is typically over 3 to 5 years which make it a major problem for our patients as seeking to include Leprosy in a different diagnosis when there has been no recent travel stretches even the best and most diligent clinician. Some of those infected have just evidence of a rash, others with patches of paraesthesia and others with distinct peripheral nerve disfunction. The chronic loss of sensation (due to the damage to superficial nerves) means that the pain threshold is lessened and individuals can too easily traumatise their feet and hands and with the onset of bony absorption and the characteristic picture of missing fingers and toes appears. Since the early 1980's treatment moved from purely Dapsone (a bacterial static medication) to a far more satisfactory combination of Dapsone, Clofazimine and Rifampicin (a bactericidal approach) which lessen the individuals infectivity to others within days and this has meant that the leprosy camps of older days were no longer necessary as the infected patient was no longer a risk to others.

Warning issued in New South Wales (Australia) over concern of mosquito-borne Japanese Encephalitis risks
https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/news/Pages/20260113_00.aspx
Poor Australia is home to quite a number of unfortunate diseases and many of them are spread by mosquitoes, although staying away from snakes, spiders and crocs seems sensible too. The appearance of Japanese Encephalitis virus in the very southern regions is definitely a concern. In this particular report the virus has been identified in sentinel chickens although a man in his 60's is currently under investigation after exposure in the Riverina region. In many cases the disease can be asymptomatic but then in others it can develop into a full blown encephalitis with fatal, or at least long lasting neurological effects, so it is definitely a disease to be avoided where at all possible. In Australia the health authorities are not advising vaccination cover as the human cases are still relatively rare but that approach may change if cases continue to develop.

Increasing concern over Hepatitis A in eastern Cuba as cases continue
https://fr.cibercuba.com/noticias/2026-01-23-u1-e199894-s27061-nid319190-agrava-crisis-sanitaria-alertan-brote-hepatitis
It is worth remembering that infection with Hepatitis A can frequently keep an individual off work for quite a few months – and off alcohol for over a year! Hardly worth taking the risk eh!

Report on outbreak of Diphtheria in Western Cape region of South Africa
https://iol.co.za/news/2026-01-24-diphtheria-outbreak-in-the-western-cape-what-the-nicd-report-reveals/
The healthcare facilities in South Africa are significantly better than many other African countries and yet this reemergence of Diphtheria helps support the importance of childhood vaccination programmes and regular, where appropriate, boosters throughout life. Diphtheria has two main presentations. The less serious cutaneous version and the far more toxic laryngeal form which can be rapidly life threatening as the pseudo membrane stretches across between the tonsils and restricts breathing.

Melioidosis alert issued for residents and visitors to Northern Territory in Australia as cases increase
https://ntindependent.com.au/nt-health-issues-melioidosis-warning-as-cases-ramp-up-since-new-years-eve/
The recent wet weather in the Northern Territories of Australia has been linked to an increase in cases of Melioidosis with 25 new cases so far in 2026. The bacteria survives in deeper soil but heavy rainfall can bring it to the surface and then winds can aerosolise and infect humans through dust and droplets. It is especially a risk for those who have any immune dysfunction but also those with diabetes or other chronic health conditions. With a fatality rate of around 10% in early cases it is definitely a disease to be aware of especially in the 4th and 5th decades of life. However, the disease can present with chest symptoms but then quickly advance to a full blown septicaemia and with abscesses in liver, lungs and spleen where the mortality can be over 80%. Rapid diagnosis and administration of antibiotics can be lifesaving.