

Cholera wave nears Rio Grande

Mexican border towns report first cases as water-borne epidemic approaches

MONTERREY, Mexico (AP) — Not far from the power lunches and billionaire industries in this industrial center, children play in rotting garbage and old men scrounge for food scraps.

The other side of the tracks in this bustling northern industrial city was ripe for the cholera that arrived last week.

The disease, which has killed thousands in Latin America in the past year, has reached northern Mexico and its rivers, which flow into the Rio Grande along the American border.

Carlos Rojas, a cholera specialist at Monterrey's Technological Institute of Higher Education said the Rio Grande could be affected.

"But the only way this is going to go into the United States is through illegal aliens" who cross to find work, he said.

Thousands do, or try to, each month. Texas health officials say they have not yet found cholera there.

A dozen cases were confirmed. News reports, quoting unnamed health authorities, say there may have been as many as 200.

Along the two-lane highway to Reynosa from Guadalupe outside Monterrey, cardboard shacks line the Santa Catarina River which runs through the city.

Water filters through the trash that dots the hills and drains into the water Amparo Ortiz

Muñoz uses to bathe herself and her five children.

She has heard about cholera but is not sure what it is.

"I'm turning to the radio for information. I know I have to boil water," said Ortiz, washing a pile of clothes outside her tiny one-room shack.

In Guadalupe, a working-class community of 500,000, some 100,000 people live without drainage or drinkable water.

Scores of suburbs around this city of 2.5 million share the problem.

"Our government wants to copy America but in America people have water and drainage," said Ignacio Staines, a physician and activist in the neighborhood called Land and Liberty, where streams of sewage run down the hills like rivers.

Cholera is known as the poor peoples' disease, and it does just fine in Guadalupe, where 10 of the 12 confirmed cases here were found.

It is the first time cholera has been spotted in northern Mexico, 100 miles from the U.S. border.

Cholera bacteria showed up in two water samples from the San Juan River north of Monterrey, which receives tons of raw sewage daily and flows into the Rio Grande along the U.S. border.

"At this moment, the San Juan river is our great mortification," said Jose Cavazos, health director for the state of Nuevo Leon.

"It's a cauldron for any type of germ."

The government said the victims brought back the cholera from southern Mexico, where most of Mexico's 35 deaths have been reported.

"We were convinced it would never reach us," read an editorial in El Norte. "Cholera was something that could only happen in under-development."

"Cholera knocked on the door of the first world. It's a reminder of the unequal development in our state," said the El Porvenir newspaper.

The government has declared an alert in several municipalities and has dispatched health officials to inform people about precautions. But it dismisses fears of an epidemic.

"Nuevo Leon is not at risk," said Cavazos. "There's drainage and 92 percent has drinkable water."

He said later samples from the San Juan tested negative and that the river was contaminated by human waste from cholera carriers.

Although easily treated if caught on time, cholera can kill. The disease is spread through food and water contaminated by fecal matter.

Crime Watch

Police ask for information in recent vehicle break-ins

On Wednesday, March 4 around 9:30 a.m. near the intersection of Church & Nagle Streets in College Station, a college student was returning to his vehicle when he observed a Hispanic and black male walking away from the vicinity of his car.

As the owner approached he saw that a vehicle window was missing, then noticed that one of the suspects was carrying a bag that had been in his car. The vehicle owner watched the suspects get into their car then followed them to get a description.

The witness reported that both of the suspects appeared to be in their 20s, with the black male being 5 feet 10 inches tall, weighing 150 lbs; and the Hispanic male 5 feet 8 inches tall and 140 lbs.

They were driving a chrome-blue 1971 two-door Ford with Texas license plate 668-ZFA. Detectives believe these suspects may be involved in several similar vehicle burglaries.

This week the College Station Police Department and Crime Stoppers need your help to identify the persons responsible for this vehicle burglary. If you have information that could be helpful, call Crime Stoppers at 775-TIPS. When you call, Crime Stoppers will assign you a special coded number that will protect your identity.

If your call leads to an arrest and grand jury indictment, Crime Stoppers will pay you up to \$1,000 in cash. Crime Stoppers also pays cash for information on any felony crime or the location of any wanted fugitive.

So call Brazos County Crime Stoppers today, at 775-TIPS.

State begins investigation of ambulance companies

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — The Texas Department of Human Services has halted Medicaid payments to two San Antonio ambulance firms that submitted more than \$800,000 in claims.

The agency has referred some claims to the Travis County District Attorney's office, the San Antonio Express-News reported Sunday.

"We anticipate going to the grand jury in the next couple of months," said Claire Dawson-Brown, the prosecutor in charge of the case.

Reliable Ambulance Service and Superior Ambulance Service, are both appealing the DHS civil actions.

Reliable and its owners, Fernando and Luis Canseco, are accused of making 3,281 false claims totaling \$618,824, state records show.

Superior and its owners, John Leo Royal Jr., his wife and daughter, are accused of making 1,630 false claims totaling \$201,808.

Military campaigns against whistle-blowers, paper claims

DALLAS (AP) — Some military whistle-blowers have been forced to undergo psychiatric evaluations to discredit information they provide to investigators, a newspaper reported Sunday.

Military commanders have ordered subordinates to undergo evaluations and have sent them to mental wards as a form of intimidation or reprisal, The Dallas Morning News also reported in its copyrighted story.

Military and civilian employees who report wrongdoing have been targeted, along with political dissenters or those who

simply annoy commanders, said current and former service members.

"It is intolerable," said Rep. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., "that military whistle-blowers should be intimidated by such an insidious tactic and that those responsible should go unpunished."

In a three-month investigation by the newspaper of 27 psychiatric cases involving the military, most alleged victims had spottless records until they challenged the system.

Many have spent years since in federal court seeking redress.

The Pentagon denies the allegations. The newspaper investigated nine cases in detail.

In one, Capt. Denise Kirkland, an Air Force surgeon who complained about shoddy practices at the Little Rock Air Force Base hospital, was told by her supervisor that she had suicidal tendencies and ordered to a psychiatric evaluation in San Antonio.

In 1988, Army Staff Sgt. William T. Murphy complained about how a friend had been treated by a superior officer at the Foreign Materiel Intelligence Group at

Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md.

A series of reprimands followed along with a 30-minute psychiatric examination that reached a "diagnostic impression" Murphy had passive-aggressive traits. He asked for his record to be cleared.

The House Armed Services Committee has held hearings on psychiatric abuse since 1987 and continues to prod the Pentagon for reforms.

The Pentagon has resisted procedural reforms as potentially harmful to military order.

Research shows caffeine consumption unhealthy

By Karen S. Jensen
Special to The Battalion

Everywhere you turn these days, you get mixed messages about how caffeine affects your body. Should you cut back drastically on your intake of caffeine-containing foods, use it in moderation, or not use it at all?

Let us look into what research has shown so you can make your own informed decision.

You may have witnessed, or

been a participant, in the following scenario during your career as a student:

Somewhere in the middle of the room, an individual is trying to sit still. Another may be trying to concentrate, but is seemingly inattentive. They may also have to get up in the middle of the lecture to, most likely, go to the bathroom. They may rap their fingers or nervously tap their feet under their desk.

You may ask yourself, "Are these people hyperactive?" No,

they may be caffeine-sensitive. This scenario may relate to an extreme case, but these symptoms may indicate a caffeine-sensitive individual.

Caffeine is generally defined as a drug that stimulates the nervous system, but it also has a diuretic effect. Besides waking you up in the morning, caffeine makes you excrete more water. A drug that has diuretic action has the possibility of removing water-soluble vitamins along with it. Water-soluble nutrients such as Vitamin C,

B-vitamins, zinc, and magnesium are the main victims.

Caffeine can also cause nervousness, irritability, anxiety, insomnia, and disturbances in heart rate and rhythm. It also seems to influence blood pressure, coronary circulation, and the secretion of gastric juices. It also increases the adrenaline level in the bloodstream.

Many athletes have tried to use this for positive athletic performance, but this has not proven to increase athletic ability to any ex-

tent in scientifically-controlled studies. The increased adrenaline in the blood puts stress on your heart, hormonal systems, and nerves.

Even so, students may take caffeine in the form of over-the-counter medication, such as NoDoz or Vivarin, in an effort to help with late-night studying. This practice is not recommended. The effects of caffeine on maternal and prenatal health have

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The Battalion

USPS 045-360

The Battalion is published daily except Saturday, Sunday, holidays, exam periods, and when school is not in session during fall and spring semesters; publication is Tuesday through Friday during the summer session. Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77840.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Battalion, 230 Reed McDonald Building, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-1111.

News: The Battalion news department is managed by students at Texas A&M University in the Division of Student Publications, a unit of the Department of Journalism. Editorial offices are in 013 Reed McDonald Building. The newsroom phone number is 845-3316. Fax: 845-2647.

Opinions expressed in The Battalion are those of the editorial board or the contributor, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Texas A&M student body, administrators, faculty or the A&M Board of Regents.

Advertising: For campus, local and national display advertising, call 845-2696. For classified advertising, call 845-0569. Advertising offices are in 015 Reed McDonald and office hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Fax: 845-5408.

Subscriptions: Mail subscriptions are \$20 per semester, \$40 per school year and \$50 per full year. To charge by VISA or MasterCard, call 845-2611.

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IMPETIGO STUDY

Individuals of any age with symptoms of impetigo (bacterial infection of the skin) to participate in an investigational drug research study using a cream with drug in it. \$150 for those chosen and completing the study.

TENSION HEADACHE?

Individuals with moderate to severe Tension Headaches wanted to participate in a 4-hour headache relief research study with an investigational medication in tablet form. Flexible hours. \$75 incentive for individuals who are chosen and complete the study. Daily, till 6:30 776-0400.

ASTHMA STUDY

WANTED: Individuals, age 12-65, with mild to moderate asthma to participate in a clinical research study for 6 weeks with an investigational medication in inhaler form. Individuals must be using inhaled steroids and bronchodilators daily to qualify. \$400 incentive paid to those completing the study.

SKIN INFECTION STUDY

Individuals age 13 and older wanted to participate in a research study for bacterial skin infections such as: abscess, infected burns, boils, infected hair follicles, impetigo, and others. Investigational oral antibiotic in capsule form. \$100 incentive for those chosen who complete the study.

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