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Update On Cholera Epidemic, April 26 - May 19

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April 26: According to official reports, five cases of cholera have been confirmed in Brazil, all in Tabatinga, located near the country's border with Peru and Colombia. April 30: In the Amazon region, almost 2,000 cases of the disease have been reported, and the death toll is 50. The World Health Organization (WHO) reported a total of 169,265 cases of cholera in Peru, and 1,244 deaths. A WHO spokesperson in Ecuador said confirmed cases number 1,107. In Colombia, 189 cases of cholera have been confirmed, and five people have died from the disease. A total of 26 persons in Chile have been infected, and one has died. May 2: At a meeting in Santiago, Chile, economist Francisco Javier Labbe (University of Chile) said economic losses resulting from the cholera epidemic are estimated at between $300 and $500 million per year. Labbe said the estimate was based on the impact of the epidemic on agricultural and fishing activities, and collateral effects on other economic sectors. According to Labbe, thus far in 1991, Chilean exporters of fruit, vegetables and seafood have lost about $70 million, equivalent to 3% of annual sales. He also predicted that foreign tourism would drop by about 30%. Forum participants said the government must prioritize plans to install a water purification system for sewer water used to irrigate plantations around Santiago, believed to be the main cause for the spread of cholera. The installation would require expenditure of at least $600 million in four years. May 3: Colombian Health Ministry sources reported that seven persons have died from cholera, and confirmed cases number 434, most in Narino department. May 5: The Peruvian Health Ministry's epidemiological office reported 1,256 deaths and 173,515 confirmed cases of cholera in Peru. Salbato Della Monica, European Economic Community (EEC) ambassador in Lima, and Jose Zirena, Peruvian representative to World Vision, signed a $40,000 cooperation agreement. The money is earmarked for combatting cholera in areas characterized by "extreme poverty." In Argentina, vegetable crops in Mendoza were destroyed over the weekend as a preventive measure. Sanitation controls were stepped up in Bolivian and Chilean border areas. Health authorities in the port city of Mar del Plata closed 25 fish processing plants because of sanitation infractions. Of a total 32 million, 14 million Argentines do not have access to potable water, and 21 million lack sewer services. May 6: The number of new cholera cases in Peru has dropped dramatically from a peak in March, when more than 20 people were dying every day. Over the past 30 days, officials said, 40 people died of the disease. Dr. Salomon Zabala, head of the Daniel Carrión state hospital in Lima, said cholera admissions had dropped to 20 a day, down from 100 a day a month ago. A spokesperson for the Cayetano Heredia state hospital in Lima said 60 people were being hospitalized daily with cholera, down from 230 a day in April. Once admissions fall below 30 daily, hospital officials say, they will consider the epidemic under control. Peruvian health workers postponed a planned walkout at emergency wards where tens of thousands of cholera patients are treated. Spokespersons for Lima state hospitals said up to 90% of the 70,000 health workers are participating in the strike, which began March 15. The figure does not include physicians, who are not union members. In a communiqué, the Colombian government expressed disapproval of the restrictive measures imposed by the European Community on imports from Colombia, Peru and Ecuador to prevent the spread of cholera. The Venezuelan government closed beaches along the nation's central coastline in order to prevent a possible cholera outbreak. May 8: A spokesperson for the Peruvian Health Ministry's general
epidemiology office reported 1,306 deaths from cholera, and 178,150 confirmed cases. The mortality rate is 0.7%, and the proportion of persons infected who have been hospitalized is 38.7%. May 9: In Santiago, Chile, the local news media reported that confirmed cases numbered 39. Most infected persons are residents of the Santiago metropolitan area who contracted the disease after eating raw vegetables that had been irrigated with untreated water. May 10: At an annual meeting, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported 2,454 deaths from cholera in Latin America and Africa thus far in 1991. The death toll in Peru was 1,300; Zambia, 840; Ecuador, 195; Colombia, 6; and Chile, 1. The WHO reported 177,103 confirmed cases of cholera in Peru (as of May 7), and 10,906 in Zambia. Colombian Health Ministry officials said the cholera death toll had reached eight. May 12: In Colombia, 10 new cholera cases were confirmed in Buenaventura (Pacific coast), and in Ipiales and Ricaute, Narino department. As of May 12, the cholera death toll in Colombia was 13, and the number of confirmed cases, 810. May 16: Brazil and Peru finalized an agreement to implement emergency sanitation measures along mutual borders to prevent the epidemic from spreading from Peru's Amazon region into Brazil. According to press reports in Caracas, cholera has arrived in Venezuela. The first confirmed case was reported in the city of Santa Elena, located in southern Venezuela along the Pan-American Highway near the Brazilian border. In Ecuador, the Health Ministry reported a cholera death toll of 132. Ministry officials said the mortality rate of persons infected with cholera was 1.8% overall. For cholera victims among the indigenous population in Chimborazo and Imbabura departments, the mortality rate was 7%. May 18: Health officials in Cuiaba, capital city of Mato Grosso state, Brazil, reported that cholera had arrived in Brazil's interior. The disease was confirmed in the case of one person in the town of Ponte Lacerda, making the first in Brazil outside the Amazon city of Tabatinga, located near the Colombian and Peruvian borders. At least 72 cholera cases have been registered over the last few days in the Colombian port city of Buenaventura. May 19: Two new cholera cases were reported in the Brazilian city of Tabatinga. The total number of confirmed cases in Brazil was increased to 13. [Basic data from Prensa Latina (Cuba), 05/01/91; Xinhua, 05/01/91; Inter Press Service, 05/02/91; AFP, 04/30/91, 05/01/91, 05/03/91, 05/05/91, 05/06/91, 05/08/91, 05/11/91, 05/12/91, 05/16/91; AP, 05/06/91, 05/08/91; Deutsche Press Agentur, 05/10/91, 05/16/91; EFE, 05/06/91, 05/09-11/91, 05/18/91, 05/19/91; IPS, 05/02/91; Notimex, 05/08/91]