

How to stay alive and well while travelling — complete guide now available

On 19 February WHO published *International travel and health*, which provides comprehensive advice for travellers on how to avoid infectious diseases. The new publication, accompanied by a website (www.who.int/ith/), draws on WHO's global network to supply up-to-date information on prevention, vaccination and what to do in the event of illness. "It contains vital advice for all travellers, from business executives flying in and out of a capital city to independent adventurers or humanitarian aid workers visiting more remote parts of a country," says David Heymann, the director in charge of communicable diseases at WHO. Pierre Jeannot, head of the International Air Transport Association, calls it "a prime example of cooperation between the world medical and other scientific communities and transport providers". Apart from offering practical information on infection, the guide points out that the chances of getting run over or drowned while travelling are much higher than those of catching a fatal disease. More information from Iain Simpson (simpsoni@who.int).

Influenza viruses for next year's vaccines named

The viruses WHO recommends for use in influenza vaccine for the northern hemisphere in the next influenza season (end of 2002 and beginning of 2003) are designated as follows: an A/New Caledonia/20/99(H1N1)-like virus; an A/Moscow/10/99(H3N2)-like virus (of which the widely used strain is A/Panama/2007/99); and a B/Hong Kong/330/2001-like virus. International influenza experts reached this conclusion at WHO's headquarters in Geneva on 6 February. After this annual meeting, more than 230 million influenza vaccine doses are produced and given. WHO strongly advises early vaccination, especially for the elderly and chronically ill. For most people in good health, influenza amounts to fever, headaches, coughing and a few days off work or school, followed by complete

recovery. However, the worst pandemic of the 20th century was the "Spanish flu" of 1918–19, which killed 40 million people, and only vigilance can reduce the chances of an outbreak of this kind happening again.

Online access to 1000 journals in 70 developing countries now affordable

Health researchers in 70 developing countries now have Internet access free or at greatly reduced rates to over 1000 biomedical journals, through the Health InterNetwork website: www.healthinternetwork.net. The arrangement, which came into effect on 31 January, is the result of a proposal made by WHO and the *BMJ* to the six biggest publishers of medical journals: Blackwell's, Elsevier Science, the Harcourt Worldwide STM Group, Wolters Kluwer International Health and Science, Springer Verlag, and John Wiley. The aim was to find a more affordable pricing structure for online access to their international biomedical journals. Until this change, subscriptions to these journals, whether in print or electronically, had been priced uniformly for all institutions, irrespective of geographical location. At the average annual cost of several hundred dollars per journal, that put most of them beyond the reach of most health and research institutions in the poorest countries. WHO and the publishers are working with the Open Society Institute of the Soros foundation and other partners to extend the initiative, for instance through training, and improving Internet connectivity.

Opportunity for WHO and Geneva academics to join forces

The Geneva International Academic Network (GIAN) supports 1–2 year interdisciplinary research and training programmes aimed at promoting peace and justice. The five main subject areas designated are: sustainable development; social equity; globalization and international commerce; intercultural relations and dialogue; and humanitarian law and human rights. The foundation

is designed to pursue its goals by catalysing "action-oriented synergies" among academic institutions and international organizations in Geneva. Nongovernmental organizations and the private sector can also be involved. Funding provided by the GIAN ranges from SFr 35 000 to 500 000 (US\$ 20 000–300 000). The GIAN applies the principle of co-financing and each team must demonstrate its ability to provide a substantial contribution to the project, either in the form of funds provided by another donor or as a contribution in-kind. Following its first call for projects in the spring of 2001, eight projects were retained, and the GIAN began to finance their activities in late 2001. The deadline for the submission of detailed project proposals for the 2002 round of funding is 2 April 2002.

Among the projects retained for funding last year is "Understanding the impacts of small arms on global health". The Violence Prevention department of WHO is working with researchers in the Graduate Institute of International Studies and the University of Geneva's Institute of Legal Medicine to collect and analyse information on this subject.

Conditions and procedures for participation can be found at GIAN's web site: www.ruig-gian.org.

Global forum recognizes food safety needs

WHO and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) convened the first ever global forum for food safety regulators from 28 to 30 January in Marrakech, Morocco. To find better ways to fight food-borne disease, 300 participants from 104 countries and 20 international organizations spent the three days exchanging information and discussing their experience with strategies and systems for improving food safety. Though not designed to produce recommendations, the forum reflected global recognition of the need for safety measures throughout the food production chain, from farmer and fisherman to consumer. It was also clear that all stakeholders should be involved in the regulatory process, and that it should be based on the risk analysis approach. ■