

ensure that food of animal origin does not bring with it unwanted and unexpected consequences such as the occurrence of resistance to antimicrobials or antibiotics that we use to treat disease in humans. This is a result of the use of antibiotics in animal fodder, which contributes to the emergence of antimicrobial resistance in pathogens, such as *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter*, that are transmitted to humans via contaminated meat. And we should not forget our preventive work related to avian

influenza. Here, we have focused both on occupational and food-safety aspects, promoting simple messages to avoid transmission of the virus by following sensible rules for contact with poultry and its slaughter and preparation.

Q: How effective is the Codex Alimentarius for fighting foodborne disease?

A: Despite some of its weaknesses, such as the slow and cumbersome administrative procedures, the Codex Alimentarius is an important means

of setting food safety standards based on independent scientific advice. WHO's collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization and other UN agencies in establishing these food standards has helped to improve the lives of people worldwide and to facilitate international trade in food. We need to work towards a greater use of existing trade mechanisms, such as aid for trade, to help developing countries improve risk assessment and risk management systems for food safety. ■

Recent news from WHO

- **Dr Margaret Chan** of China, 59, was appointed as WHO's **new director-general** on 9 November, following the untimely death of Dr Lee Jong-wook in May 2006. She was one of five candidates shortlisted from 13 by WHO's Executive Board for the post. The others were Dr Kazem Behbehani of Kuwait, Dr Julio Frenk of Mexico, Dr Shigeru Omi of Japan and Elena Salgado Méndez of Spain. The 34-member board elected her on 8 November and this appointment was confirmed at a one-day session of the World Health Assembly on 9 November. Her term runs from 4 January 2007 to 30 June 2012. Chan pledged to take forward the legacy of Dr Lee and his predecessor, Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland. Chan paid tribute to the late Dr Lee for his work, particularly the "3 by 5" campaign to provide treatment for people with HIV/AIDS. "I have the determination to achieve results for health," she told the Executive Board after her election. "We have to be smart in our planning and priority-setting and streetwise in our actions. I will work tirelessly with my eyes on the goal and my ears open to the voices of all." Chan is a well-known public figure because of her record of leadership in fighting disease first in Hong Kong*, and more recently at WHO. Chan started her career in public health in 1978 at the Hong Kong Department of Health. In 1994, she was appointed director of health of Hong Kong and during her nine-year tenure confronted the first human outbreak of H5N1 avian influenza in 1997 and successfully defeated severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China in 2003. She also introduced primary health care "from the diaper to the grave" with a focus on health promotion and disease prevention, self-care and healthy lifestyles. After two decades of working closely with WHO, Chan joined WHO as director of the Department of Protection of the Human Environment in 2003. In June 2005, she became assistant director-general for the Communicable Diseases cluster of departments and, at the same time, took up the newly-created post of representative of the director-general for pandemic influenza. Chan obtained her MD degree from the University of Western Ontario, Canada, in 1977.
- The board of the **Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria** said on 2 November it would continue to search for a new executive director. The decision came after board members failed to agree on one of five shortlisted candidates.
- WHO and a group of more than 25 partner organizations unveiled a new strategy on 26 October to fight some of the most **neglected tropical diseases** that destroy the lives and health of poor people around the world. The approach explained in a new manual, *Preventive Chemotherapy in Human Helminthiasis*, focuses on how to use a set of low-cost or free drugs in developing countries to control diseases caused by worm infections.
- Winstone Zulu, a TB/HIV activist from Zambia, and Dr L S Chauhan, National TB Control Programme manager from India, won the **Stop TB Partnership Kochon Prize**, in recognition of their contribution to TB control. The prize was inaugurated this year.
- WHO warned on 23 October that the world would be several billion doses short of the amount of **pandemic influenza vaccine** needed to protect the global population should an influenza pandemic occur in the near future. Dr Marie-Paule Kieny, director of the WHO Initiative for Vaccine Research, called for immediate and sustained action and funding for activities within WHO's new global pandemic influenza action plan to increase vaccine supply.
- WHO issued a practical guide to help countries prevent **violence against children** on 16 October. The guide, *Preventing child maltreatment: a guide to taking action and generating evidence*, published by WHO and the International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, shows how violence against children can be prevented.

* Hong Kong, a British colony, became the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China on 1 July 1997.

For more about these and other WHO news items, please see: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/events/2006/en/index.html>



Dr Margaret Chan

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