

Recent news from WHO

- **Preventing communicable disease outbreaks** was the key public health issue facing the People's Republic of China in the aftermath of the earthquake that struck the country's south-western region on 12 May. WHO said on 17 May that it was working closely with China's Ministry of Health to offer aid, supplies and guidance.
- WHO has released US\$ 400 000 for the immediate health needs of people in Myanmar affected by **Cyclone Nargis**. A United Nations Flash Appeal was launched earlier in May to raise more funds. WHO officers monitoring disease outbreaks and helping to deliver health care said that the number of cases of diarrhoea was increasing. WHO has sent medical supplies, including essential medicines and equipment, to be distributed to survivors.
- With the threat of a global influenza pandemic demanding continued vigilance, 120 influenza and planning experts from WHO Member States, research institutions and United Nations agencies met in Geneva in May to review current **WHO pandemic preparedness guidance**. WHO will release the revised guidance, based on discussions at this meeting, later this year.
- When millions of HIV-infected people in poor countries began receiving **advanced drug therapies**, critics worried that patient care would suffer because few laboratories were available to guide treatments. But according to a study published on 25 April in the *Lancet*, these concerns are unfounded. The study finds that when clinicians use simple physical signs of deteriorating health – such as weight loss or fever – these doctors can provide therapies that are almost as effective as those relying on advanced laboratory analysis.
- The WHO Regional Office for Europe published a new book by the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies on the role of **health technology assessment** in the European Union, featuring case studies from Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom. *Ensuring value for money in health care: the role of health technology assessment in the European Union*, is available at: http://www.euro.who.int/eprise/main/who/InformationSources/Publications/Catalogue/20080414_1

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