

1 May 2009

Chem-Bio News

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- 2. GOOGLE COULD HAVE CAUGHT SWINE FLU EARLY:** "Last week, at the request of the Centers for Disease Control, Google took a retroactive look at its search data from Mexico. And there the team found a pre-media bump in telltale flu-related search terms (you know, "influenza + phlegm + coughing") that was inconsistent with standard, seasonal flu trends."
- 3. DISEASE AND TERROR - THE SWINE-FLU OUTBREAK CAUGHT HEALTH OFFICIALS COMPLETELY BY SURPRISE—JUST AS A BIOTERROR ATTACK WOULD:** "The central driver is the increasingly interconnected world we live in. Even the most remote areas of the planet can now be reached in less than 48 hours."
- 4. EMERGENCY CARE COORDINATION CENTER UP AND RUNNING:** "Just as swine flu begins its likely spread around the nation and the world, the federal government has unveiled its newly formed Emergency Care Coordination Center (ECCC), characterized recently in the Federal Register as a "new strategic entity," located in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and created "in fulfillment of Homeland Security Presidential Directive 21," as well as in response to Institute of Medicine reports in 2006."
- 5. 1918 SPANISH FLU VIRUS RESULTED IN CURRENT LINEAGE OF H1N1 SWINE INFLUENZA VIRUSES:** "A Kansas State University researcher has found that the virus causing the pandemic was able to infect and replicate in pigs, but did not kill them, unlike in other mammalian hosts like monkeys, mice and ferrets where the infection has been lethal."
- 6. ISRAEL'S PERES SEES CONTAINMENT FOR A NUCLEAR IRAN:** "A nuclear-armed Iran could be contained through threats of retaliation, Israeli President Shimon Peres said Wednesday."

CB Daily Report

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KOREAN-AMERICAN CHARGED IN ROCKET TECHNOLOGY PLOT

The Associated Press on BostonHerald.com
April 29, 2009

"A Korean-American man who served prison time for trying to broker the sale of sarin nerve gas bombs to Iran has been indicted on charges of attempting to export advanced rocket technology to South Korea.

The federal indictment filed Wednesday in Miami charges 68-year-old Juwhan Yun of Short Hills, N.J., with illegally trying to arrange a deal for rocket propulsion systems for a South Korean satellite launch vehicle.

Yun was convicted in 1989 of conspiracy involving the nerve gas plot and served about two years in prison."

The full article can be found at:

http://news.bostonherald.com/news/national/south/view/2009_04_29_Korean-American_charged_in_rocket_technology_plot/srvc=news&position=also

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GOOGLE COULD HAVE CAUGHT SWINE FLU EARLY

By Alexis Madrigal

Wired.com

April 29, 2009

“Google’s search data may have been able to provide an early warning of the swine flu outbreak — if the company had been looking in the right place.

Last week, at the request of the Centers for Disease Control, Google took a retroactive look at its search data from Mexico. And there the team found a pre-media bump in telltale flu-related search terms (you know, “influenza + phlegm + coughing”) that was inconsistent with standard, seasonal flu trends.

“We did see a small increase in many parts of Mexico before major news coverage began last week,” said Jeremy Ginsberg, lead engineer for Google.org’s Flu Trends.

But the Google Flu Trends team, which aggregates and analyzes search queries to estimate how many people are sick, wasn’t watching Mexican flu data until after the outbreak had already begun. That highlights the problem with tech-heavy disease-detection systems: Often, we don’t know what internet data to look at until after a problem starts.

The early signals of disease are hidden in plain sight, and it takes humans recognizing that something is happening before the computers can be asked to find it. And even if Flu Trends had picked up a noticeable bump in flu searches in Mexico early, a lot of additional analysis would have been required to understand the potential severity of the pandemic.”

The full article can be found at: <http://www.wired.com/wiredscience/2009/04/google-could-have-caught-swine-flu-early/>

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DISEASE AND TERROR - THE SWINE-FLU OUTBREAK CAUGHT HEALTH OFFICIALS COMPLETELY BY SURPRISE—JUST AS A BIOTERROR ATTACK WOULD

By D.A. Henderson

Newsweek

April 30, 2009

“The central driver is the increasingly interconnected world we live in. Even the most remote areas of the planet can now be reached in less than 48 hours. Diseases now plaguing those in refugee camps, heavily populated and growing slums or the most remote tropical rainforests can, without warning, show up in far-flung towns and cities. A devastating hemorrhagic-disease epidemic in Africa or South America could rapidly become the hemorrhagic epidemic of Boston or Bordeaux. Even good clinicians rarely have the knowledge to diagnose and treat exotic tropical diseases. Until a month ago, our attention was focused on Asia—the source of the last two influenza pandemics, in 1957 and 1968—as the likely source for the next one. And yet it appeared in Mexico while we weren't looking.

A revolution in biology and medicine has recently given us powerful new tools to fight infectious diseases. It has also given us bioterrorism. The potential for terrorists to develop, grow and spread biological weapons has increased rapidly with the proliferation of knowledge and laboratories. As we discover the secrets of the cause and spread of disease, we are also finding ways of engineering a virus or bacterium to be more virulent or perhaps to evade antibiotics or vaccines. It's difficult to overstate the threat. As disastrous as the explosion of an atomic weapon would be, the strategic use of biological organisms such as smallpox, anthrax or plague could be even more devastating.”

The full article can be found at: <http://www.newsweek.com/id/195422>

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EMERGENCY CARE COORDINATION CENTER UP AND RUNNING

By Louis Chunovic,
Government Security News
April 29, 2009

“Just as swine flu begins its likely spread around the nation and the world, the federal government has unveiled its newly formed Emergency Care Coordination Center (ECCC), characterized recently in the Federal Register as a "new strategic entity," located in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and created "in fulfillment of Homeland Security Presidential Directive 21," as well as in response to Institute of Medicine reports in 2006.

HSPD-21, which addressed the subject of public health and medical preparedness, was intended to establish a new, formal national health strategy. And when it comes to delivering and improving daily emergency medical care under HSPD-21's aegis, the ECCC is meant to be the federal government's tip of the spear.”

The full article can be found at: <http://www.gsnmagazine.com/cms/features/news-analysis/1933.html>
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1918 SPANISH FLU VIRUS RESULTED IN CURRENT LINEAGE OF H1N1 SWINE INFLUENZA VIRUSES

Medical News Today
May 01, 2009

“In 1918 a human influenza virus known as the Spanish flu spread through the central United States while a swine respiratory disease occurred concurrently. A Kansas State University researcher has found that the virus causing the pandemic was able to infect and replicate in pigs, but did not kill them, unlike in other mammalian hosts like monkeys, mice and ferrets where the infection has been lethal.

Juergen A. Richt, Regents Distinguished Professor of Diagnostic Medicine and Pathobiology at K-State's College of Veterinary Medicine, studied the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic with colleagues from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Mount Sinai School of Medicine.

Their research supports the hypothesis that the 1918 pandemic influenza virus and the virus causing the swine flu were the same. Richt said the virus was able to infect and replicate in swine and cause mild respiratory disease. The 1918 virus spread through the pig population, adapted to the swine and resulted in the current lineage of the H1N1 swine influenza viruses. The researchers' study is published in the May 2009 Journal of Virology.”

The full article can be found at: <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/148404.php>
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ISRAEL'S PERES SEES CONTAINMENT FOR A NUCLEAR IRAN

By Dan Williams
Reuters
April 29, 2009

“A nuclear-armed Iran could be contained through threats of retaliation, Israeli President Shimon Peres said Wednesday.

Breaking with Israeli leaders who have refused to countenance the idea of Iran getting the bomb and hinted at preemptive strikes to prevent that happening, the elder statesman played down the feasibility

of the military option.

"Simply attacking the nuclear facilities is not the be-all and end-all," Peres told Israel's Channel Ten television."

The full article can be found at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/topNews/idUSTRE53S78020090429>
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