

# Overseas briefs

Source: World Health Organization (WHO)

## *Fatal myocarditis in Sarawak, Malaysia*

The number of deaths in the outbreak of myocarditis increased to 26 on 17 June. Three of the deaths occurred in the second half of April, 10 during May and the remainder in June. Most children had fever for 2 to 3 days and were admitted to hospital when their condition deteriorated. The clinical picture indicated viral involvement with an enterovirus as the possible agent. Enteroviruses are mainly transmitted by the faecal-oral route and the public has been advised to maintain good personal hygiene; wash hands after defecation and before handling food, avoid sharing baby pacifiers, and avoid overcrowding. Public health measures include increased control of flies and cockroaches, and closures of nurseries, playschools, kindergartens and public swimming pools in Kuching and Sibul where most deaths have occurred. All health facilities and hospitals in the State are on alert and an observation ward has been established in Sibul Hospital. A similar facility is planned in Sarawak General Hospital in Kuching. Active case finding has been instituted among the family members of all the cases reported.

## *Cholera, Somalia*

The cumulative number of cases of cholera reported is now 5,557 with 247 deaths (case fatality rate 4.4%). However the true number of cases is believed to be higher, since mild cases are excluded in the reports from most treatment centres. Also laboratory confirmation has not been possible in some areas due to logistical constraints and security problems. Suspected cholera outbreaks in areas of Middle Shabelle and Galgaduud Regions have been reported recently. The epidemic in Mogadishu declined steadily up to mid-May but rose again the following week. WHO continued its support to non-government organisations and local authorities, supplying oral rehydration solutions and antibiotics. Water chlorination and health education continue in local communities.

## *Dengue, Cuba*

On 16 June 1997, the Ministry of Health reported that 826 cases of dengue (including three deaths) had occurred in the city of Santiago de Cuba, located in the southernmost part of the island. The infections were first recognised in January this year. Dengue has been confirmed by the 'Pedro Kouri' Institute of Tropical Medicine, the Pan American Health Organization/WHO Collaborating Centre for the Study of Viral Diseases. This represents the first reported cases of dengue in Cuba since 1981 when approximately 350,000 cases and 158 deaths occurred.

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Contributions covering any aspects of communicable diseases are invited. Instructions to authors can be found in *CDI* 1997;21:9.

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