

**Pacific disease control:** The BC Centre for Disease Control will expand to become the Pacific Centre for Disease Control, with a focus on diseases emerging in Asia. The change makes official collaborations between research and health centres in Singapore, China and India. “The BCCDC unofficially [is already] the gateway for the Asia-Pacific Rim region for emerging diseases,” says spokesperson Ian Roe. The BCCDC led the way in cracking the genetic code of the SARS virus and developing a vaccine. The centre has joint projects testing a SARS vaccine in Guangdong, China, and is working in Vietnam on HIV and sexually transmitted infections, says provincial health officer Perry Kendall. “We’re interested in building a collaborative network. The changes in the centre’s mandate and name are partly for economic reasons, as part of a BC plan to develop trade and “become North America’s foremost crossroads to the Asia-Pacific,” said Premier Gordon Campbell after the goal was announced in BC’s February throne speech. — *Deborah Jones, Vancouver*



Art Explosion

Kong [82%],” says Dr. Donald Low, microbiologist-in-chief at Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto and principal investigator at the Canadian Bacterial Surveillance Network, which collected the data. The decline in penicillin resistance in Canada parallels the decline in total prescribing of penicillin. The rates of PRSP range from more than 40% in part of sub-Saharan Africa to as high as 70% in East Asia. In the US the rate is about 30%.

**Privacy invasion?** Doctors Nova Scotia has filed an appeal in the Supreme Court against the Freedom of Information decision to release doctors’ names and their billings. The physician organization claims releasing this information is an invasion of privacy. The provincial NDP party, which filed the Freedom of Information request last August, says the public has a right to know how their health care dollars are being spent. Dr. Maria Alexiadis, President of Doctors Nova Scotia says they understand the important of being accountable, “but we did not see the rationale for having physicians’ names next to the earnings.” BC and Manitoba disclose doctors’ annual medicare billings.

**Retraction:** The journal *Nutrition* (21[2]:286) has retracted published research by a Canadian scientist concerning the benefits of vitamin supplements for seniors. In 2001, *Nutrition* published an article by Dr. Ranjit Kumar Chandra, then an immunologist at Memorial University in Newfoundland, claiming striking cognitive benefits for people over 65 who took a daily multivitamin and mineral supplement that he had formulated and has since patented. Editor-in-chief Dr. Michael Meguid

now states that an analysis of the study by a group of scientists “found some of the claims made [were] implausible [and] not reproducible, that the basis on which the data were analyzed was not appropriate and could not yield the results claimed.” Meguid writes that his journal should not have published the article by Chandra, a prominent researcher, Order of Canada recipient and Nobel Prize nominee (1992). In mid-2004, then-*BMJ* editor Richard Smith called for an investigation of all Chandra’s work because he believed this study showed signs of being fabricated. Chandra, who lives in India and Switzerland, was not available for comment. His company now sells the supplement, Javaan 50, in the US.

**Measles deaths drop:** Globally, measles deaths have dropped by 39% from 873 000 in 1999 to an estimated 530 000 in 2003, report WHO and UNICEF. Africa saw the largest reduction with an estimated 46% decrease in measles deaths. The dramatic decline is the result of governments’ commitment to implement the WHO/UNICEF strategy for sustainable measles mortality reduction. The strategy aims to have measles immunization coverage of at least 90% and to ensure that every child, from 9 months to 14 years, has a second opportunity for immunization. Since 2001, the Measles Initiative has mobilized more than US\$144 million. Countries are on target to halve deaths from measles by the end of 2005. “We now have the opportunity to replicate this successful model as we tackle other child killers such as malaria,” said UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy. — Compiled by *Barbara Sibbald, CMAJ*



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