

This Week in History

OCTOBER 21

1832 - Maria W. Stewart, an African-American women's rights and abolitionist speaker, says in her farewell address "...for it's not the color of the skin that makes the man or woman, but the principle formed in the soul."

1865 - Jamaican national hero George William Gordon is unfairly arrested and sentenced to death.

1872 - John H. Conyers, Sr. becomes the first African-American admitted to the US Naval Academy.

1917 - Famed jazz trumpeter John Birks ("Dizzy") Gillespie is born in Cheraw, SC. He will, with Charlie Parker and Theolonius Monk, be the founder of the revolutionary bebop movement.

1979 - The Black Fashion Museum is opened in Harlem by Lois Alexander to highlight the achievements and contributions of African-Americans to fashion.

1989 - Bertram M. Lee and Peter C.B. Bynoe sign an agreement to purchase the National Basketball Association's Denver Nuggets for \$54 million. They become the first African-American owners of a professional basketball team.

OCTOBER 22

1854 - James Bland is born in Flushing, NY. He will write over 700 songs including "Oh, Dem Golden Slippers" and "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny." The latter song will be selected in 1940 as the state song of Virginia, the state's legislators little knowing the identity and race of its composer.

1936 - Bobby Seals is born in Dallas, Texas. He will become a radical political activist and co-founder, with Huey Newton, of the Black Panther Party.

1952 - Frank E. Peterson, Jr. is commissioned as marine aviation officer.

1986 - In an interview with the *Washington Post*, Spike Lee says, "Movies are the most powerful medium in the world and we just can't sit back and let other people define our existence, especially when they're putting lies out there on the screens."

1991 - Thirty African-American delegates conclude a three-day visit to the Republic of South Africa at the invitation of the African National Congress. While there, TransAfrica's Randall Robinson charges President Bush with failing to exert his influence to end black township strife and Congresswoman Maxine Waters vows to press US cities and states to maintain sanctions against the republic.

OCTOBER 23

1775 - The Continental Congress prohibits the enlistment of blacks in the Army.

1783 - Virginia emancipates slaves who fought for independence during the Revolutionary War.

1847 - William Leidesdorff brings his ship Sitka from Sitka, Alaska, to San Francisco, Calif. Earlier in the year, the Danish West Indies Native had launched the first steamboat ever to sail in San Francisco Bay. The ventures were one of many activities for Leidesdorff, which included appointment as US vice-counsel, property acquisition in San Francisco.

1886 - Wiley Jones operates the first streetcar in Pine Bluff, Ark.

1945 - Branch Rickey of the Brooklyn Dodgers signs Jackie Robinson to the club's Triple A farm team, the Montreal Royals. In a little under 18 months, Robinson will be called up to the majors, the first African-American to play major league baseball.

1951 - The NAACP pickets the Stork Club in support of Josephine Baker, who has been refused admission to the club a week earlier. After a city-convened special committee calls Baker's charges unfounded, Thurgood Marshall will call the findings a "complete and shameless whitewash of the long-established and well-known discriminatory policies of the Stork Club."

OCTOBER 24

United Nations Day

1935 - Langston Hughes's play *Mulatto* opens on Broadway. It will have the longest run of any play on by an African-American until Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*.

1936 - The Boston Chronicle blasts the soon-to-be-released movie *The Big Broadcast of 1937* for featuring a white pianist who appears in the movie while Teddy Wilson actually plays the music: "The form of racial discrimination and flaccidification of acts ... is frequently duplicated by many whites in their

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HEALTH

Researchers study why cancer ravages blacks

Associated Press

Blacks are less likely to have lung cancer removed by doctors while there is still a chance of survival — a big reason the disease is deadlier for blacks than for whites, researchers reported Monday.

The researchers said they don't know exactly why this is so, but the president of an organization of black doctors suggested racial prejudice is at work.

Early lung cancer has few symptoms, so many patients do not learn they have it until it has spread and it is too late to operate. Even with surgery, the chances are poor.

About 34,000 people a

year are diagnosed with non-small-cell lung cancer — the most common kind — early enough for surgery to make a difference.

Doctors at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York looked at such patients and found the overall five-year survival rate among elderly whites was 34.1 percent vs. 26.4 percent among elderly blacks. However, the study found black patients were almost 13 percent less likely to have such surgery than the whites.

Among those who had the cancer cut out before it spread, about 39 percent of the blacks and 43 percent of the whites lived at least five years after

the diagnosis. Without the operation, only 4 percent of the blacks and 5 percent of the whites made it that long.

"Obviously, the opening question left by this study is what is going on in that doctor-patient relationship or interaction" that leads to the black-white difference, said Dr. Peter Bach, who led the study published in today's *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Doctors have long known blacks with lung cancer are more likely than whites with the disease to die from it. But the reasons have been unclear. This is evidence that different medical treatment is at least part of the reason,

and at least the second major study this year to find blacks get different medical treatment than whites.

Blacks are also more likely than whites to die of heart disease — and earlier this year, a study found blacks and women are less likely than white men to get the best cardiac testing.

"The data is coming from so many sources that it is hard even with the best of conscience not to think that race is the factor, be it conscious or unconscious," said Dr. Walter Shervington of New Orleans, president of the National Medical Association, an organization (See Cancer, Page 15)

Infection-related deaths traced to antibiotic abuse

By Danielle Knight

WASHINGTON (IPS) —

An increase in fatal drug-resistant infections in the United States can be traced to the over-use of antibiotics, especially in agriculture, according to a group of public health scientists.

"There is a global public health problem of antibiotic resistance," said Fred Angulo, a public health scientist with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"The threat of untreatable infections is growing in hospitals, communities generally and on the farm," he said. "We need to use these drugs more prudently wherever they are used to slow the progression of resistance."

Antibiotics, introduced more than 50 years ago, have saved countless lives worldwide.

Before the development of these drugs, death through bacterial infections in even minor wounds was a frightening possibility in this country. Now, because of resistance to antibiotics, once-treatable infections are again becoming fatal.

More than 90 percent of strains of *Staphylococcus aureus* bacteria, a common cause of hospital "Staph" infections, are now resistant to penicillin, according to Angulo.

Four children died in the last few years from common Staph infections resistant to antibiotics, according to the CDC. More than 30 percent are resistant not only to penicillin but also to every other antibiotic used to treat Staph infections — except

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— Fred Angulo

one known as vancomycin.

Last year, however, vancomycin-resistant strains of Staph appeared in the United States, beginning with the death of a man in New York.

"Uses of antibiotics creates selective pressures which result in dissemination and spread of bacteria resistant to antibiotics," Angulo said.

Use of the so-called "miracle" drugs is widespread in the United States. In 1954, this country produced two million pounds of antibiotics; for 1999, the figure exceeds 50 million pounds.

The problem of resistance partially is due to doctors over-prescribing antibiotics for humans, said Angulo. The CDC estimates that about one-third of the 150 million outpatient prescriptions for antibiotics every year are unnecessary.

But a lesser-known problem of over-use occurs on farms. More than half of the antibiotics used in the United States are estimated to be used in animal feed for poultry, hogs and cattle.

Some 30 antibiotics — such as tetracycline, penicillin and streptomycin — are approved by the FDA for many uses in livestock.

However, in 80 percent of cases, the drugs are used to fatten the animals faster instead of to treat illness,

according to Rebecca Goldberg, senior scientist with the Environmental Defense Fund.

"This indiscriminate and non-essential use of antibiotics in agriculture dangerously increases the possibility that these antibiotics and other closely related ones will be ineffective when needed to treat people," she said.

Between 40,000 and 50,000 pounds of tetracycline and streptomycin — both used to treat infections in humans — are sprayed to control bacterial disease among fruit trees, she said.

In comparison, one pound would be enough to treat around 450 people.

Antibiotics that are effective in human medicine are also used for treatment of bacterial infections in salmon,

catfish, trout and other commercially-raised fish.

In the United States, more than 55 million pounds of farmed salmon are produced per year. Goldberg estimates that nearly 150 pounds of antibiotic are applied per acre of salmon.

"Since pens are placed in natural sea waters, antibiotics and the resulting resistant bacteria have contact with other marine life and end up spreading into surrounding streams, lakes and rivers," she said.

"This increases the odds that humans will develop resistance to antibiotics or come in contact with fatal resistant bacteria," said Goldberg.

Antibiotic resistance can move from animals and plant disease to human bacteria, she said. *E. coli* and *Salmonella*, for example, are in the same bacteria family as *Erwinia*, a fruit tree disease.

According to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the CDC, resistant strains of three specific organisms (See Antibiotics, Page 13)

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