

WHO eyes polio cures in Africa

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) - The U.N. health agency plans to vaccinate nearly 3 million children in the Horn of Africa this year against polio, a crippling disease that experts fear could spread rapidly along the region's volatile and porous borders.

The campaign, which starts Saturday and runs through December, will target children under age 5 in Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia.

"Nomadic people move between these countries all the time, so the idea is to try to get to these children and protect them," Dr. Mohamed Dahir Duale, a Kenya-based doctor with the World Health Organization, said Friday.

Polio is a waterborne disease that usually infects children through contaminated drinking water, attacking the nervous system and causing paralysis, muscular atrophy, deformation and sometimes death. Last year, some 1,880 people were infected with polio worldwide.

Medical work in Africa often is hampered by violence and political uncertainty, and because the continent has vast tracts of rural, ungoverned land. Somalia, for example, has had no effective government for 15 years and no health care system.

"I urge the WHO to bring their message to rural areas as well," said Afrah Hassan Mo'allin, who was crippled by polio as a child and now lives in the Somali capital, Mogadishu. "Polio affected me when I was too young, and my parents were not city dwellers."

Dr. Mulugeta Abraham, polio coordinator for WHO-Somalia, said the new polio campaign will include work by local leaders and thousands of local volunteers, making access much easier. Polio-free for almost three years, Somalia became re-infected in 2005 with a case in the capital, Mogadishu, which has degenerated into a huge, looted shantytown since warlords toppled longtime dictator Mohamed Siad Barre in 1991.

To date, there are 215 confirmed cases in Somalia, according to the WHO. Ethiopia has had 37 cases since December 2004 and Kenya has been polio-free for 22 years. When WHO launched a \$4 billion anti-polio campaign in 1988, the worldwide case count was more than 350,000 annually. WHO had hoped to eradicate the disease globally by the end of 2005, but missed that target in part because of a 2003 vaccine boycott in Nigeria.

Hard-line Islamic clerics there claimed the polio vaccine was part of a U.S.-led plot to render Nigeria's Muslims infertile or infect them with AIDS. Vaccination programs restarted in Nigeria in July 2004.

South Africa curbs minister

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (AP) - South Africa's government scaled back the influence of its minister for AIDS policy, pilloried for questioning the effectiveness of anti-retroviral drug treatments and promoting beetroot, garlic and African potatoes as ways to fight AIDS.

A group of international scientists called for Health Minister Dr. Manto Tshabalala-Msimang, nicknamed "Dr. Beetroot," to be fired and they labeled South Africa's program "inefficient and immoral."

Government spokesperson Themba Maseko defended the minister, but said last Friday the Cabinet had appointed a committee headed by Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka to oversee the implementation of the country's AIDS

program. "We need to shift focus from saying the problem in the program is the minister of health," Maseko said.

In an open letter to President Thabo Mbeki last week, 81 international AIDS scientists called the health minister an embarrassment to South Africa and accused him of undermining HIV science and failing to gain any international respect.

The scientists include American Nobel Laureate David Baltimore and Dr. Robert Gallo, a co-discoverer of the virus that causes AIDS and developer of the first HIV blood test. They called for an end to South Africa's "disastrous, pseudoscientific policies" and urged Mbeki to remove the health minister immediately.

With the letter, the scientists joined mounting calls by

AIDS activists and opposition parties for the president to fire Tshabalala-Msimang.

South Africa has an estimated 5.5 million people infected with HIV, a number second only to India and one that amounts to about an eighth of estimated cases worldwide. On average, more than 900 people die of the disease each day in South Africa. The government said Thursday that the adult death rate had climbed significantly over a seven-year period, largely because of AIDS.

Mbeki previously has expressed doubts about the connection between HIV and AIDS, and along with Tshabalala-Msimang has questioned the effectiveness of anti-retroviral drugs in treating the disease.

Tshabalala-Msimang's office said in a statement Fri-

day that there was a campaign aimed at deliberately misrepresenting the government's program to fight the disease.

Her statement and the Cabinet reacted not only to the scientists' letter, but also to other attacks on its policies at the International AIDS conference in Toronto last month, including a scathing one by Stephen Lewis, the U.N. special envoy for AIDS in Africa.

"It is the only country in Africa...whose government is still obtuse, dilatory and negligent about rolling out treatment," Lewis said. "It is the only country in Africa whose government continues to promote theories more worthy of a lunatic fringe than of a concerned and compassionate state."

The scientists noted that at (See AIDS, Page 15)

Your Horoscope Says... Sept. 14-Sept. 20

ARIES

Loving care is what the world is in need of this week and you get a lot of inward joy out of giving it. Your ability to move back emotionally from problems and thereby administer to them will give you an advantage this week. Use it wisely.

Soul Affirmation: Confusion gives me an opportunity to show my love.

Lucky Numbers: 11, 43, 51

TAURUS

Cheer them up. They don't see the big picture. You can. Let them know about the light at the end of the tunnel. It is clearly in focus for you. Enjoy it and make your joy contagious. Give love this week, but wait for a while to search for its return.

Soul Affirmation: Hope is a beautiful jewel. I enjoy owning it.

Lucky Numbers: 7, 16, 25

GEMINI

Endurance and regeneration are keys for you this week. You'll be needing both those qualities to get you past the negative thinking that is flooding the spiritual environment this week. Soar high where the sun is shining. Seek resources from the highest levels of your nature and spread them to those you love.

Soul Affirmation: I get joy from giving good things.

Lucky Numbers: 9, 32, 46

CANCER

Eternal optimist, eternity is now. Get in touch with your hopefulness and be a beacon to others. Try not to be taken in by promises made by others or promises you've made to yourself. Concerning your own affairs, avoid contemplating lofty subjects and seeking long ranged solutions.

Soul Affirmation: This week is the day the Lord has made. I rejoice in it.

Lucky Numbers: 4, 8, 39

LEO

Work. You like work. You have faith in the results it produces. Luck is important, but getting the job in front of you done to the best of your ability will put you ahead of the game this week. Work at love, or rather, work for those you love.

Soul Affirmation: Facing down challenges makes me feel good about myself.

Lucky Numbers: 1, 45, 50

VIRGO

Don't ask yourself when the answer will come. It is on its way, but it will not get here this week. Yield not to frustrations. Don't fly off the handle and create problems for yourself later on. Chill. Time will provide the best medicine for anything that ails you this week.

Soul Affirmation: I smile and trust in the powers beyond myself.

Lucky Numbers: 22, 30, 53

LIBRA

This week is excellent for being still and letting the wealth inside you produce emotional dividends. Get in touch with the forces that work behind the scenes that produce the bright facades that everyone enjoys. Take comfort in the fact that you know these forces are eternal.

Soul Affirmation: I let the outer world and inner world change places this week.

Lucky Numbers: 27, 35, 41

SCORPIO

Did external circumstance allow you to get into your true soul vibration last week? Well, last week was good for getting into a positive way of looking at what is happening. This week you'll be called upon to express that positive way to the entire world around you. Enjoy being yourself.

Soul Affirmation: What I need to be is fully present inside of me.

Lucky Numbers: 15, 23, 55

SAGITTARIUS

If you feel blessed this week, don't be surprised. With last week's soul vibration, you were able to see a wonderful truth about yourself. Did you look? If you did then this week that truth will shine in everything you do.

Soul Affirmation: The earthiness of my being reflects the sunshine of my soul.

Lucky Numbers: 8, 10, 47

CAPRICORN

You may feel a bit frustrated that some of the miscellaneous items from your "to do" list reappear for this week. Chill. Find ways to exert excess stress positively. Everything you need to get done, will be done. You've got what it takes. Continue to shine!

Soul Affirmation: Another day in which to rejoice is upon me. Ah-h-h-h!

Lucky Numbers: 3, 4, 14

AQUARIUS

The sincere emotions that should have flowed through you last week will begin to glow more brightly this week. No matter what the emotions were, you can find the good in them this week. If you have to search deeply, do so. The good is there in abundance this week.

Soul Affirmation: My emotions provide me a pathway into the sunshine of my being.

Lucky Numbers: 5, 9, 17

PISCES

Energy is higher than it was last week. You might feel like the sunshine inside yourself provides blinding light. Walk into it. There are no dangers. Put dark glasses on your soul vibrations and be cool. This day is too light, too bright.

Soul Affirmation: I love myself when I am laughing.

Lucky Numbers: 12, 33, 42



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