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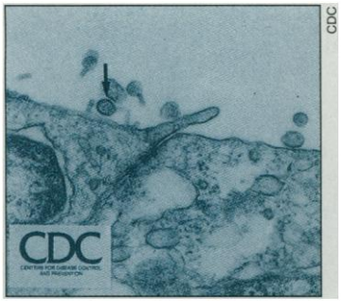


**Hot trail.** New journal will track infections such as this hantavirus.

## On-Line Journal to Track New Diseases

It may not catch on like *The Hot Zone*, the best seller that follows the outbreak of an exotic virus in suburban Washington, D.C., but another chronicle of new infections is due out soon: *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, a peer-reviewed quarterly edited at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta.

The journal, which is to debut in January and appear on-line by late spring, will help fill a publishing niche that has attracted intense public and scientific attention over the past 3 years, thanks to the appearance of unexpected disease threats and of re-energized, drug-resistant microbes. Both have helped puncture scientists' confidence in humankind's ability to fend off serious infections, while raising public awareness of exotic bugs.

EID will depart from tradition in two ways: It will be interdisciplinary, investigating the influence of demographics, economic development, and human behavior on emerging infections. And the on-line version will feature dispatches hot off editors' desks from laboratories and from field epidemiologists witnessing outbreaks around the globe. "The whole concept is to get ahead of the curve," says editor Joseph E. McDade of CDC.

## Earth Calling FASEB ...

"It's pretty clear that the NIH [National Institutes of Health] budget is not going to grow very much over the next several years. We are laboring under legislation which established ceilings ... and any major increase in NIH funding is extremely unlikely before the end of the century."

—NIH Director Harold Varmus, Boston, 30 October

The members of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) "recommend a $12.459 billion budget for NIH in 1996 (a 10% increase), in order to seize the opportunities presented by recent advances in neurosciences, cardiovascular medicine, cancer research and molecular genetics." FASEB also recommends an increase of "14% in funding for research project grants" at NIH, a 23.6% increase in the directorate for biological sciences at the National Science Foundation, a 10% increase for biology programs at the Department of Energy, and a 76.5% increase in the National Research Initiative (competitive grants) at the Department of Agriculture.

—FASEB report, Bethesda, Maryland, 14 December

## Energy Cuts Endanger Fusion, Neutron Efforts

While the Department of Energy endured a close brush with bureaucratic death last week, survival came at a steep price. DOE officials must now follow through on a promise to find $22 billion in savings between 1997 and 2001—more than the department's $18.5 billion annual budget. This sweeping exercise imperils every major planned energy project, from fusion to neutron-scattering facilities, officials say.

DOE Secretary Hazel O'Leary has pledged to make nearly half of the cuts in current programs, including $1.1 billion in applied energy projects. Another $4.9 billion will come from across the agency. At risk are big-ticket items like the Tokamak Physics Experiment and the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor. The latter's fate requires "a fundamental course correction," one DOE source says, while the scope of the tokamak project may be reduced. Also at risk is the Advanced Neutron Source.

## Fillon in Doghouse Over University Shuffle

French universities are in an uproar over a government plan, announced earlier this month, that would redistribute wealth from the elite research universities to less favored schools. The plan, devised by science minister François Fillon, prompted an immediate protest. Students at major universities have staged public demonstrations, and several groups last week were threatening a work stoppage.

Fillon, the target of these protests, has played both hero and villain in the eyes of France's scientific community in recent months. In October, he was riding high after arranging a bailout for the deficit-ridden Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, France's largest research agency. But Fillon fell from grace when he announced that he wanted to eliminate nearly 80 so-called "teacher-researcher" positions in six leading French universities to create new posts at campuses short on professors who do research.

The proposed shuffle has outraged university scientists, who fear the quality of France's most prestigious research institutions will be eroded. "It would be as if in the United States one took professors away from Harvard or Berkeley to give to less well-endowed campuses," says Alain Gaudemer, president of the University of Paris at Orsay, a globally known center of physics research set to lose 21 positions.

Last week, students and professors from Orsay demonstrated in front of the research ministry to protest the plan, and Gaudemer and two other university presidents signed an open letter to Fillon protesting his policies. But Fillon defended his plan in a speech before the French Senate, arguing that the disparities between research-rich and research-poor universities were "intolerable."

## Russian Law Targets Genetic Engineering

The Russian government is poised to crack down on what it views as a potentially grave health threat: genetic engineering. Next month the Russian parliament is expected to debate a draft law that would mandate strict regulation of all genetic experiments, from basic research involving recombinant DNA to industrial efforts to engineer transgenic plants and pollutant-eating microbes.

The impetus for the law comes from environmental scientist Alexei Yablokov, who chairs a Russian National Security Council commission on ecological security. In a speech to parliament last October, Yablokov called on government to take steps to regulate genetic engineering experiments, which he claimed pose a greater threat to Russian health than radioactivity. His evidence: an anthrax outbreak in Sverdlovsk in 1979 that killed 66 people. Last month, Russian and U.S. scientists concluded that the bacteria that caused the outbreak had been released from a Russian germ-warfare genetics lab (*Science*, 18 November, p. 1202).

The proposed law takes Yablokov's warnings to heart. Its guiding principle is that "public and environmental safety takes priority over any advantage resulting from use of genetic engineering technologies and organisms." The law would mandate each Russian institution engaged in genetic research to establish a biosafety committee for reviewing genetic research protocols and proposed field experiments. The law would also create a national committee on genetic engineering to review risky experiments and maintain a registry of qualified geneticists.

If genetic experiments were to go awry, the draft law says institutions would be "obliged to reimburse damage caused to human health and public property." But it fails to lay out how such claims would be filed or enforced.