

## **WASHINGTON LEDGER** (fictional newspaper)

HEALTH NEWS

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### **VIRUS SICKENS OVER 600 US CITIZENS—KILLS 20 IN CHINA**

By J. SMYTHE

The Center for Disease Control announced today, the Avian Influenza, Influenza A H5N1 was identified in three returning members of the American Paralympic Cycling Team. The CDC confirmed the virus had been spread by human to human contact during their time in China. It is apparent that H5N1 has mutated into a strain capable of efficient human-to-human transmission.

The Cycling Team participated in the Paralympic Games held in Beijing, China, which run from 6-17 September. The team had been in China since August 25<sup>th</sup> and returned to the United States on September 9<sup>th</sup> after competing in their preliminary heats and final competition on September 8<sup>th</sup>.

The team members complained of fever and chills just after exiting their return flights to New York, Oklahoma and Delaware. The cyclists participated in a post-competition ride to Quinhaungdao, a port city, east of Beijing, in an effort to see more of the host country, China. It is believed they were exposed to the influenza during this ride.

The strain of the Avian Influenza H5N1 found in the cyclists was the same strain that had been identified in mid-August in the Liaoning Province, east of Beijing. The outbreak of Avian Influenza H5N1, caused deaths in 20 known deaths in the 1000 people identified with the illness. Large clusters of cases have been identified in China.

The three cyclists were admitted to their local hospitals and their status has not yet been made available. Approximately 45 more people in California, Chicago, St Louis, Oklahoma, New York and Delaware were admitted to hospitals with the same flu-like symptoms two days ago (Sep 10<sup>th</sup>). It is assumed many of these people were on the same airline flights as the cyclists or came in contact with the athletes just after their arrival back in the US. Some of the patients include family members and neighbors. Two children are said to be seriously ill and another patient is in intensive care with respiratory distress.

Yesterday, approximately 200 more cases were admitted to hospitals around the nation and the reported number of people admitted today is double, or more than 400 cases admitted. Thousands of calls are being made to hospitals and doctors' offices and are said to be flooding the telephone lines. Several swine farms in Oklahoma and poultry farms in Delaware have also reported seeing influenza-like illnesses and dead animals in their herds and coops.

The CDC expects the outbreak to spread quickly around the country in the next two to three weeks. School systems are considering their next steps and businesses are beginning to implement their Pandemic Plans to avoid further outbreak and infection. Of primary concern is preventing infection of our nation's children. The World Health Organization has declared the pandemic situation to be at Phase 5 and is quickly moving into Phase 6.