

This week's briefs:

- MOH CY2003 budget will increase healthcare spending to \$210M. The previous regime spent only \$13M.
- Kimadia trucks keep rolling on pharmaceutical deliveries; up to 1,750 tons delivered in 42 days!
- National Nursing Conference starts Tuesday for management and floor nurses from across Iraq. The two-day conference, July 15-16, will open dialog on the future of nursing in Iraq.
- Countdown – only 12 days until the next Iraq National Vaccination Day -- July 22. All vaccinations provided free of charge.

Pharmaceuticals by the tons

An additional 450 tons of pharmaceuticals and equipment were delivered this week to various regional locations, bringing the total since May to 1,750 tons. This week CPA staff met with WHO and UNICEF to finalize the prioritization of Oil For Food Program contracts to ensure that there will be sufficient supply of medical supplies and pharmaceuticals for the Iraqi people.

HIV negative certification for visitors to Iraq

Point of entry HIV certification and testing is suspended for 90 days pending full review of the HIV/STD prevention program.

Previously, people visiting Iraq for more than 14 days were required to show proof that they tested negative for HIV or else they were detained pending an on-site HIV test. The aim of this policy was to keep HIV infection levels in Iraq to a minimum.

Recent surveillance data suggests that before the war there were less than 300 cases of HIV/AIDS in Iraq. The majority of these were hemophiliacs who received contaminated French blood products in the 1980s and small number of children (c5%) born to infected mothers. In addition a survey of over 2000 people from high risk populations in 2002 revealed no HIV positive tests.

MOH infection control staff will verify the reliability of the data as well monitor future incidents of HIV.

MOH budget increase

July 7, 2003 -- Ambassador L. Paul Bremer, Chief Administrator for the Coalition Provisional Authority, approved a budget for the MOH for July through December 2003 in the amount of \$210 million. This includes \$125 million for pharmaceutical supplies and equipment replacing the "Oil for Food" contracts which expire November 21.

The budget provides funding for basic health care services and equipment backlogs and repair throughout Iraq. It adds \$31 million for generators to support hospitals in Baghdad in addition to the \$9 million previously approved for generator support.

The former regime spent only \$13 million for health care in Iraq in 2002 for a population of 23 million, a 90% reduction from the amount spent in 1992.

Physicians to staff BIAP clinic

Twelve Physicians and 24 support staff from the Ministry of Health are being deployed to staff the medical clinic at Baghdad International Airport. CPA in conjunction with the MOH participated in an exercise to test emergency response in preparation for the upcoming airport opening.

Vaccine count is in...next vaccine day could top it

Based on figures provided by the 123 primary health care centers in Karkh and Rusafa health districts in Baghdad, more than 24,800 doses of vaccines from the basic series of BCG, DTP, OPV, HBV, measles and MMR vaccines were provided to over 7,700 children.

In total, over 29,300 doses of vaccine were provided to more than 11,400 different recipients. Data from the other governorates are still being collected.



(Photo by: Maj. Dan Irazary)

The next vaccine day should well increase these counts as more parents are increasingly aware of the on-going program.

The MOH will push publicity on radio, newspaper, and a poster campaign.

Basrah hospital visit

July 3, 2003 -- Mr. James Haveman, MOH Senior Advisor visited three hospitals in Basrah, which though busy with many patients, provided further evidence of the deteriorated state of medical facilities and infrastructure.

Hospital beds are more than 20 years old. The pharmacies were stocked with medicines, but were disorganized and in some cases contained drugs from sources known to be of low quality; air conditioning was not available.

Medical equipment was lacking and in need of repair. He met with representatives of the regional Governorates and all the hospitals. Their concern centered on hospital budgets, salaries for medical providers, and the need for clarity on the role of military hospitals which have been absorbed by the

Ministry of Health. He spent time responding to their questions and talking about the future.

New Iraqi Army health screenings

Recruiting operations and health screenings) for the New Iraqi Army begin July 10th. Thirty-six former military doctors and 132 ancillary medical staff members, now part of the Ministry of Health, will be staffing three recruiting stations at Mosul, Baghdad and Basrah.



Opening Day Soon for Al Saydia: Construction crews prepare the new clinic in the Al-Rasheed District of Baghdad for a grand opening in late July. The clinic will serve 45,000 patients annually. (Photo by: Maj. Dan Irazzary)

Interagency meeting on the Al Tuweitha

The CPA/MOH team convened the first interagency meeting on the Al Tuweitha Nuclear Power Plant, including numerous NGO's, the Iraqi Atomic Energy Organization and military public health and radiation units. Military assessments have concluded based on preliminary samples, that there is no risk to soldiers who remain stationed at the site.

Greenpeace, which has taken an activist role in alleging harm to local citizens, was invited to participate in a strategy task force but declined to participate. Instead, Greenpeace organized a public demonstration at the Palace to advance the view that there has been harm to local citizens.

The interagency task force continues to meet on this issue and plans to make public a comprehensive report once investigations are complete.

MOH-NGOs open dialogue on health services in Iraq

The MOH convened a meeting of representatives of non-governmental organizations at the MOH amphitheater to open a dialogue on all issues related to support for health services in Iraq. Many of the NGO's are involved in small to medium sized projects throughout the country; some will be involved on a longer term basis as the health system evolves. More than 40 people attended, representing NGOs from throughout the world. The group will meet bi-weekly at the Ministry of Health.

USAID's contractors, Abt and Bechtel, were invited to make presentations at the next meeting on July 17th.

Committee on Medical Specialties

The Iraqi Committee on Medical Specialties, convened under the auspices of the Senior Advisor, will end discrimination based on ethnicity or geographic location in the selection process for residencies which had been the practice under the former regime. For the first time in decades, residents will compete on an equal basis for advanced specialty training. Co-examiners from outside Iraq may be brought in to conduct the scheduled fall exams for the residency programs.

More statistics

Hospital and Clinics:

Nearly all of Iraq's 240 pre-war hospitals, 10 specialty centers and more than 1200 clinics are open and providing services for patients.

CPA estimates that basic health care services are restored to:

- 90% of pre-war level in Kurdistan
- 80% of pre-war level in the South
- 70-75% of pre-war level in Baghdad

Health Status:

Disease prevalence monitoring is ongoing by the Ministry of Health. Chlorera has been reported in the south at anticipated levels. Some malaria cases have been reported in the north.

Water chlorination, vector spraying and appropriate treatments are being implemented. No nation-wide epidemic is threatening at this time.

Maternal and child mortality rates throughout Iraq remain unacceptably high.

Events Calendar:

July 15-16th -- National Nurses Group Conference in Arabic at the Convention Center

July 17th -- Governorate Director Generals Meet at the MOH Bldg.

July 17th -- 11:00 a.m. NGO-MOH Meeting on Health at the MOH building

July 22nd -- Iraq National Vaccination Day

July 31st -- 11:00 a.m. NGO-MOH Meeting on Health at the MOH building

Please e-mail your questions or comments/calendar input to:
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