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REASONS

Shigeru Omi, WHO regional director for the western Pacific, plots the spread of avian flu.

of care to its staff and their dependents, and to maintain the agency's essential functions. It adds that if a pandemic is declared, "it is very likely that all stocks of medicine useful against influenza, particularly oseltamivir, will be rapidly exhausted". It suggests that WHO offices stockpile the drug for 8,000 employees.

Each WHO office should have enough oseltamivir (Tamiflu) to give a five-day course to 30% of its staff and their dependents, the plan suggests. "Some countries may choose to stockpile more, but should be aware that it may become difficult to reserve these excess stores for only the use of UN personnel and families during a severe community-wide outbreak." It also advises that, "because antivirals will become valuable commodities during a pandemic, they should be stored in a secure place".

According to the document, the WHO's headquarters in Geneva is initially stockpiling 1,000 five-day courses of oseltamivir. The plan also lists a series of secondary measures such as stockpiling antibiotics, syringes and face masks, and instructs offices to consider how to convert warehouses, meeting rooms and gymnasiums into temporary wards.

The United States is expected to release its national pandemic plan in the next few weeks. France and Britain have ordered drug stockpiles to cover a quarter of their citizens, close to WHO's internal target, but the US stockpile currently covers just 1% of its population. ■

**Declan Butler**

## WHO urges regional offices to stockpile flu drug for staff

Has your employer thought about how to protect its staff and maintain essential services in the event of a global influenza pandemic? If not, it's worth noting how seriously the organization perhaps best informed about the threat — the World Health Organization (WHO) — is taking the possibility. Its own plan calls for a stockpile of antiviral drugs large enough to treat up to 30% of its staff and their families.

Experts agree that the H5N1 avian flu virus,

which is endemic in southeast Asia and is faning out across Russia and Kazakhstan, could trigger a human pandemic. The WHO's internal plan, a copy of which has been obtained by *Nature*, warns that all prerequisites for the start of a pandemic have been met except one: the establishment of efficient and sustained human-to-human transmission of the virus.

The document, dated 30 May 2005, notes that if a pandemic occurs, the WHO has a duty

## Kansas backs lessons critical of evolution

The Kansas State Board of Education has decided by six votes to four to include stronger criticism of evolution in its high-school biology curriculum. Science advocates fear that the move paves the way for 'intelligent design' — the idea that an intelligent creator shaped living things — to reach the classroom.

"This is a religiously motivated strategy," says Harry McDonald, president of Kansas Citizens for Science in Olathe, which vehemently opposes the new standards. "Religious advocates have decided that they can push their views forward by casting doubt on science."

The Kansas Board of Education's chairman Steve Abrams, who helped write the amendments, dismisses the charges as "baloney". "Is it wrong to teach critical

analysis and critical thinking?" he asks.

This is the second time that the board has tried to alter the state's standards for the teaching of science. In 1999, the board voted to remove evolution, cosmology and geology from Kansas's curriculum, leaving teachers to decide individually whether or how to teach the subjects. But these topics were reinstated into the high-school syllabus after activists from science and business communities helped elect more moderate members to the board in 2000 (see *Nature* 406, 552; 2000).

Now, a newly elected, more conservative board is seeking to augment the evolution curriculum with criticisms of Darwin's theory commonly espoused by the intelligent-design movement. The criticisms include gaps in the fossil record and the inability of evolution to explain the first life

on Earth. The standards also refer to macroevolution as a "controversial" theory.

"These standards are very clearly denigrating evolution," says Eugenie Scott, executive director of the National Center for Science Education in Oakland, California. She believes that the standards are part of a new nationwide strategy by intelligent-design advocates to undermine the way evolution is taught in public schools. In 2002, Ohio passed education standards that mandate teaching that scientists "continue to investigate and critically analyse aspects of evolutionary theory". But the new Kansas rules are far bolder, says Scott.

The board will now send the new standards out for an external review, with a final vote scheduled for later this autumn. ■

**Geoff Brumfield**