

## **NEWS FROM STOP-TB ABOUT AVIAN FLU, TB, AIDS AND MALARIA.**

News: G8 warned not to be blinkered by bird flu  
Chris Williams  
The Register (UK)  
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"SCIENTISTS AROUND THE WORLD HAVE URGED THE G8 LEADERS NOT TO GET SO CAUGHT UP IN THE THREAT OF BIRD FLU THAT THEY DIVERT THEIR ATTENTION FROM THE REAL GLOBAL KILLERS: TB, HIV/AIDS AND MALARIA"

Scientists push for focus ahead of leaders' summit

Scientists around the world have urged the G8 leaders not to get so caught up in the threat of bird flu that they divert their attention from the real global killers: TB, HIV/AIDS and malaria.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that between them the three kill around six million people every year.

An assemblage of the national science academies of every G8 country, including the Royal Society in the UK and the National Academy for the Advancement of Sciences in the US, issued the call ahead of the G8 summit in St Petersburg next month.

While recognising the potential danger if bird flu makes the long-positated evolutionary jump to human to human transmission, Royal Society president Martin Rees said: "It is also crucially important for the global community not to forget that, at present, avian influenza is not the most significant disease concern for people globally.

"It is other emerging diseases and existing infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and malaria which are causing widespread illness and severe economic harm to developing countries."

Tina Harrison, awareness officer for UK tuberculosis charity TB Alert said:

"I would totally agree." A WHO-backed plan to eradicate TB, which kills between two and three million annually, is \$31bn short of the \$56bn campaigners say it needs to succeed.

The scientists' statement calls for better funding of such efforts. Rather

than competing for cash, the threat from bird flu should serve as a driver to combat existing epidemics, they say.

The promised killer pandemic of a mutated H5N1 has so far failed to appear, despite having been discussed since soon after the strain was first detected in Guangdong in 1996. Governments, NGOs and commercial groups have produced reams of reports about preparedness and strategies in case of an outbreak.

Barring isolated cases where people have been in extreme proximity with livestock, however, the virus has had little impact in human populations; there have been 225 recorded cases, 128 of which have been fatal.

The disease in poultry is yet to cross the Channel to British animals. Researchers have been busy uncovering just why the disease struggles to gain a foothold in people.

In their G8 recommendations, the scientists argue for better cooperation on epidemic disease generally. Developing nations often have little facility to combat or monitor outbreaks, they say. Both SARS and H5N1 are thought to have originated in impoverished rural China, while HIV is thought to be derived from the simian form of the virus found in African monkeys.

In a sister statement, the bodies called for the G8 to return to the climate change agenda that hit headlines last year at Gleneagles. Russia plans to make energy security a key issue of its presidency. Rees said: "Dealing with energy security should not merely be seen as an opportunity, for example, to open up new markets for fossil fuels."

Source: [www.theregister.co.uk](http://www.theregister.co.uk)

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