

Climate and cholera

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Cholera outbreaks may soon be predicted using satellite sensors, paving the way for preemptive medicine in countries that suffer epidemics, says Distinguished University Professor Rita Colwell, speaking today at the Society for General Microbiology's 162nd meeting being held this week at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre.

The cholera *Vibrio* lives in zooplankton and can be found in bays, estuaries and rivers in temperate and tropical regions.

"Scientists have established a definable relationship between sea surface temperature, sea surface height and cholera epidemics," says Professor Colwell, from the University of Maryland, US. "We can predict cholera epidemics by monitoring these factors using satellite sensors."

"Cholera has afflicted humankind over the ages and remains a serious problem for the developing world," says Professor Colwell. "If the global effects of climate change are to be understood fully, we need to think about the human health aspect."

Professor Colwell's work is leading toward a predictive model that will provide forecasting of climatic conditions associated with specific infectious diseases, offering predictions of epidemics.

"A pre-emptive medicine may be possible for countries of the world suffering cholera epidemics," says Professor Colwell. "The issues are international and require a global scientific enterprise. The ultimate objective is an holistic understanding of the consequences of global

warming and development of policies to address them.”

Source: Society for General Microbiology

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