

# Overseas briefs

Source: World Health Organization (WHO)

## *Lassa fever, Sierra Leone*

During the first four months of 1997, 353 cases of Lassa fever with 43 deaths (12%) were reported. The number of cases increased from 45 with 7 deaths (16%) in January to 75 cases and 9 deaths (12%) in February, and 147 cases with 20 deaths (14%) in March. However there was a decrease to 86 cases with 7 deaths (8%) in April. During 1996, 470 cases with 110 deaths (23%) were reported. The Ministry of Health and Sanitation, together with WHO, is planning activities to prevent the spread of the disease

and improve management of suspect cases. Key district health personnel will be included in a nationwide training program on Lassa fever control that is planned for later in the year. The Ministry of Health and Sanitation is studying a plan for rodent control. Treatment with ribavirin was resumed in mid-April with the arrival of new supplies of the drug after the stock was depleted in February. Ribavirin will be distributed to other areas where health personnel are familiar with administration of this drug for the treatment of Lassa fever. The Ministry of Health and Sanitation is also establishing a national Lassa fever control program with a manager based in Kenema.

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