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OFFICE OF THE WHO REPRESENTATIVE IN THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM
BUREAU DU REPRESENTANT DE L'OMS EN REPUBLIQUE SOCIALISTE DU VIET NAM
P.O. Box 52, Hanoi, Viet Nam

In reply please refer to: WRV/08/L 1051
Prière de rappeler la référence: VTN CSR/OB-G

Dr Phan Xuan Trung
MEDIC Medical Center
254 Hoa Hao Street
District 10
Ho Chi Minh City

28 April 2008

Dear Dr Phan Xuan Trung,

I am writing in reply to your letter on 25 April 2008 regarding an "enquiry of cholera outbreak data." Thank you for your interest.

WHO has been providing technical assistance to the Ministry of Health of Viet Nam in their response to the current outbreak of severe acute watery diarrhoea with *V. cholerae* positive cases. This assistance has included technical advice to the National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology (NIHE) in Hanoi in their epidemiological and laboratory investigations.

WHO has recently noted in the media that NIHE's investigations have identified key high risk activities for becoming infected with cholera in this outbreak. The highest risk activity has been identified by NIHE as consumption of meals containing dog meat, shrimp paste, and raw herbs and vegetables. Strong epidemiological measures of association between cholera infection and consumption of these foods were identified through a case-control study, and supported by findings from supplementary site investigations. I understand that NIHE is conducting further investigations to better clarify the chain of infection.

If you would like further detailed information on NIHE's investigations you should make a request directly to NIHE.

I believe that the 'Ingelfinger Rule' you have referred to argues that no scientific article should be published if it has already been published elsewhere and, furthermore, that a scientific claim should always be validated before dissemination to the public. I don't think there is any suggestion that this 'rule' has been violated.

Thank you for your enquiry.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Jean-Marc Olivé
WHO Representative in Viet Nam

Cc: - Dr Tran Trong Hai, Director, Dept. of International Cooperation, MOH.
- Dr Nguyen Tran Hien, Director, National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology.