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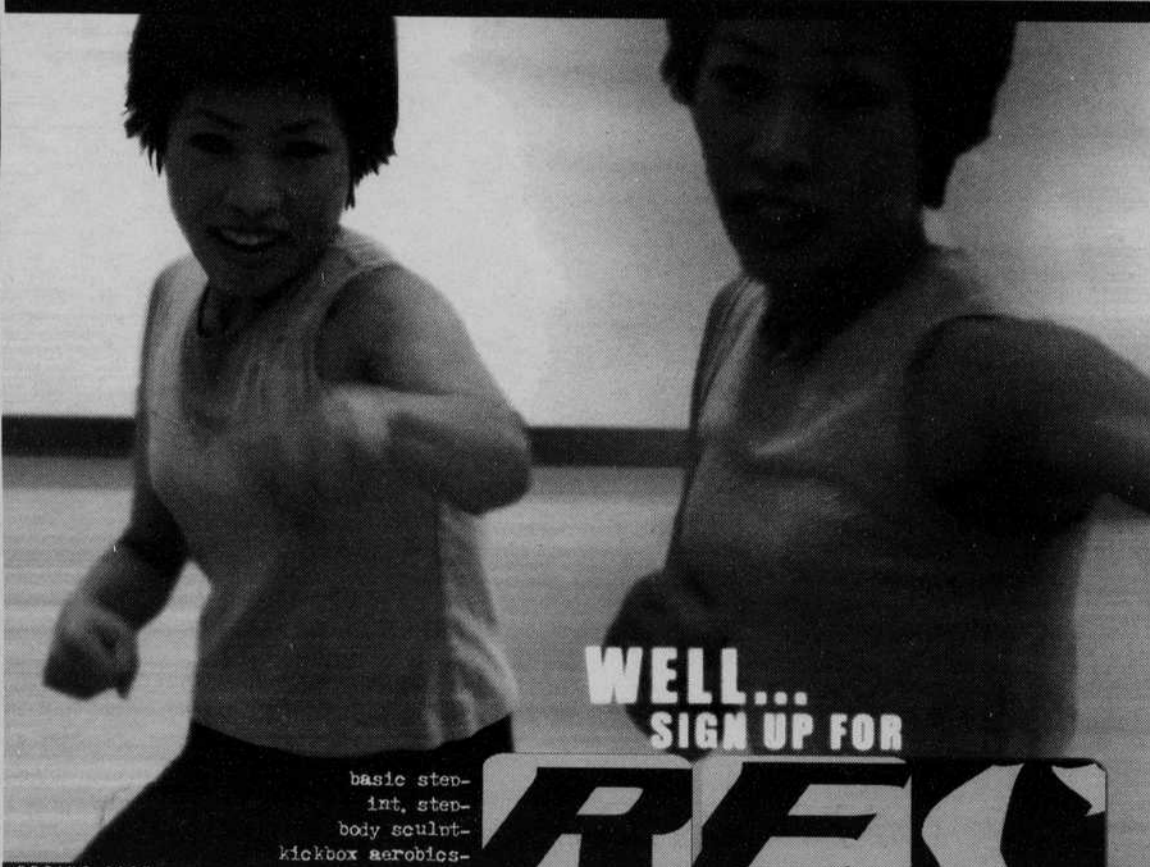


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SARS prompts vigilance

SARS, a pneumonia-like condition, has doctors on the lookout for symptoms

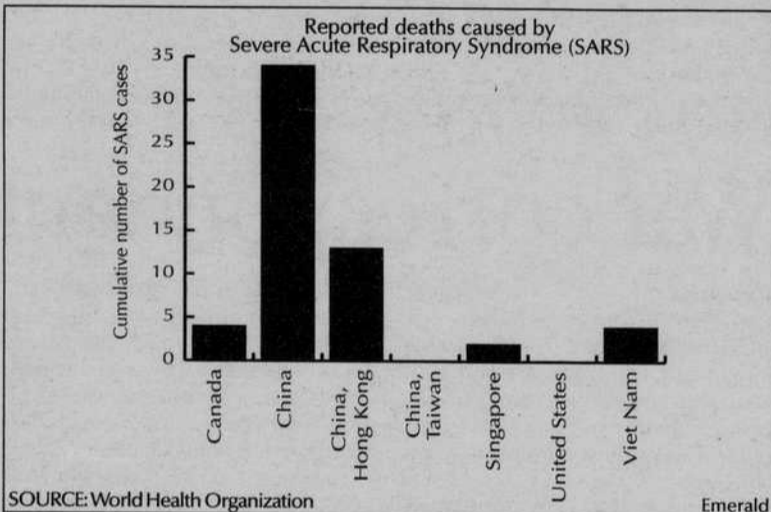
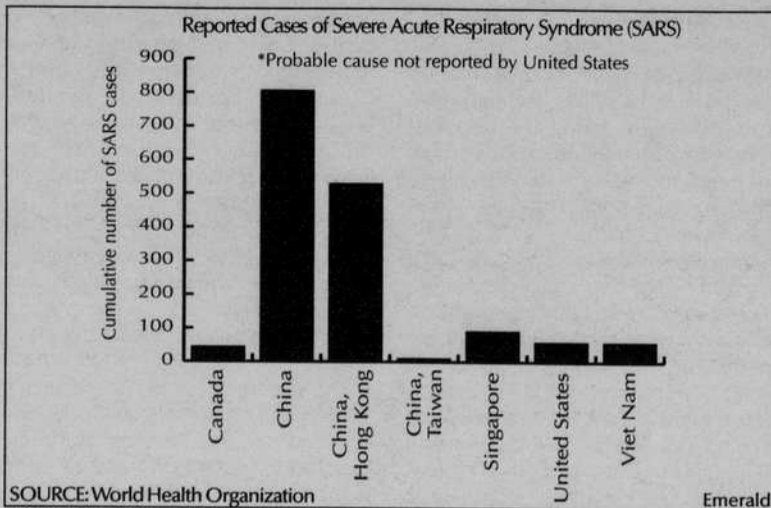
Lindsay Sauvé
 Family/Health/Education Reporter

Recent reports of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome have doctors and health officials paying particular attention to individuals with flu-like symptoms, but Lane County Public Health Department officials said the disease has not been discovered locally.

Though there have been rumors about a possible case of SARS in Lane County, Public Health official Betsy Meredith said SARS is not a threat to the local community, and the hearsay about community members contracting the disease are completely false. However, she said local health officials are still diligently checking for SARS in respiratory cases.

Anne Mattson, a registered nurse at the University Health Center, said SARS is a respiratory illness of unknown cause, similar to pneumonia that spreads through bodily secretions and exhaled droplets. She added SARS is not considered to be passed through casual contact, but through continuous contact with an infected individual, and a majority of cases have occurred in hospital workers or family members of patients with SARS.

SARS has commanded the attention of health care providers and the media in recent weeks because not much is known about the disease, and there have al-



ready been 58 reported deaths tied to SARS since it was first discovered in late February. According to the World Health Organization, the first case of SARS was reported on Feb. 26 in Hanoi, Vietnam. Although there have been no SARS-associated deaths in the United States, there have been 59 reported cases of SARS across the country, and there have been 1,622 cases of SARS reported worldwide.

According to the Center for Disease Control Web site, people who have had a history of travel to Hong Kong or Guangdong Province in China or Hanoi, Vietnam, run a higher risk of catching the disease.

"There is lots of anxiety in the world today for many reasons. SARS is a real disease, and health professionals are keeping track of it."

Betsy Meredith
 Lane County Public Health official

Mattson said prevention is a key factor in protecting oneself from SARS.

"Like with any other disease, we should all be practicing prevention methods such

WHO has established an international research project, consisting of 11 laboratories in nine countries, to work toward identifying the disease.

as washing hands and covering mouths while coughing," says Mattson.

"There is lots of anxiety in the world today for many reasons," Meredith said. "SARS is a real disease, and health professionals are keeping track of it."

Individuals who have questions about SARS are advised to visit the CDC Web site or they can contact the health center at 346-2770. Those exhibiting symptoms of SARS within seven days of travel to the above-mentioned countries should contact the health center or their primary care provider.

Symptoms associated with SARS include a fever higher than 100.4 F, coughing, difficulty breathing, shortness of breath and x-ray findings of pneumonia, hypoxia, or respiratory distress. Ac-

Contact the reporter at lindsaysauve@dailyemerald.com.

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