



## **New SARS and Public Health Policy Report, “We’ve Been Lucky,” From Trust for America’s Health**

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**Washington, DC, May 20, 2003** – Trust for America’s Health (TFAH), a non-partisan public health advocacy organization, issued a new report today: *SARS and Its Implications for U.S. Public Health Policy – We’ve Been Lucky*.

The report examines how the recent severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) outbreak highlights the “gaping holes” in the public health system -- the network of local, state, and federal health agencies that collectively are responsible for disease prevention, response, and control in America. It reviews how SARS cannot be considered in isolation, but in the context of potential, emerging, and existing health threats the country faces, ranging from West Nile Virus to cancer to potential acts of biological, chemical, or radiological terrorism.

“Declarations about the end of SARS are premature. It is very possible that the disease will be seasonal phenomenon,” said Shelley A. Hearne, DrPH, Executive Director of Trust for America’s Health. “We may be in an ebb period of the disease and should seize the opportunity to put the public health measures into place that could contain SARS, should it reemerge in the fall, and other diseases in the future.”

Speaking before the European Parliament earlier today, U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson said, “I don’t think SARS is going to go away... it may come back in the fall.... Then I think you can anticipate that you will have deaths in all continents.”

Policy measures discussed in the report that could be taken to protect communities from a full spectrum of health threats include: building a comprehensive health tracking network, strengthening state public health laboratories, recruitment of more and better trained public health professionals, and upgrading communications capabilities.

The report was co-authored by TFAH Board member Margaret A. Hamburg, MD, who serves as Vice President for Biological Programs at NTI, and Dr. Hearne. The full report is available on the TFAH website: [www.healthyamericans.org](http://www.healthyamericans.org).

TFAH is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to saving lives by protecting the health of every community and working to make disease prevention a national priority.

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