

New User? [Register](#) | [Sign In](#) | [Help](#)

[Follow soccer on Toolbar](#)

YAHOO! NEWS

[HOME](#) [U.S.](#) [BUSINESS](#) [WORLD](#) [ENTERTAINMENT](#) [SPORTS](#) [TECH](#) [POLITICS](#) [SCIENCE](#)

[Health Video](#) [Weight Loss](#) [Sexual Health](#) [Medications/Drugs](#) [Parenting/Kids](#) [Seniors/Aging](#) [Diseas](#)

TRENDING NOW: [chupacabra](#) [mel gibson](#) [oksana](#)



THE STARTING POINT: Confirmation hearing set for new intelligence chief

Tiny, toxic mushrooms kill hundreds in China

AP Associated Press

[Buzz up!](#)

By TINI TRAN, Associated Press Writer – Tue Jul 13, 11:03 am ET



AP – Robert Fontaine, an epidemiologist with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, talks about ...

BEIJING – Every summer during the height of the rainy season, villagers of all ages in a corner of southwestern China would suddenly die of cardiac arrest.

No one knew what caused Yunnan Sudden Death Syndrome, blamed for an estimated 400 deaths in the past three decades.

Now, after a five-year investigation, an elite investigative unit from China's Center for Disease Control and Prevention believes it has pinpointed the cause: an innocuous-looking small mushroom known as Little White.

The search for the culprit began in 2005 and took investigators to remote villages spread over the rural highlands of Yunnan province, said Robert Fontaine, an epidemiologist with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

There was "this very obvious clustering of deaths in villages in very short periods of time in the summer," said Fontaine, who helped in the investigation. "It appears that there was something a little different going on."

Local health officials had noted the deaths for years. In 2004, they appealed to Beijing for assistance. The government gave the task to the China Field Epidemiology Training Program, a unit of medical investigators at China's CDC assigned some of the country's toughest health mysteries.

The medical teams encountered obstacles. Many villagers didn't speak standard Chinese, instead communicating in their own dialect. Villages were scattered in often remote areas. Rapid burials made it difficult to conduct autopsies. Torrential rain and mudslides hampered travel.

But that first year, investigators were able to narrow down the list of possibilities: most victims had drunk surface water, they had emotional stress and they ate mushrooms.

The investigators zeroed in on mushrooms, because the deaths were closely aligned with the harvesting season. More than 90 percent of the deaths occurred in July or August. By the end of 2005, investigators began issuing warnings to some villages to avoid eating unfamiliar mushrooms.

That was a difficult order to follow. Yunnan province is legendary for its wide variety of wild mushrooms, many of which are exported at high prices. Entire families go out to hunt for them during the summer months.

By 2008, investigators had discovered a relatively unknown mushroom in a number of homes where people had died. The mushroom is not usually sold in the markets, because it's too small.

"We repeatedly found it at all these sites," Fontaine said.

A public information campaign to warn against eating the mushrooms has dramatically reduced the number of deaths. Only a handful have been reported in the last couple of years, and none so far this year.

However, the mystery has not yet been definitively solved.

Testing found the mushroom contained some toxins, though not enough to be deadly. Chinese scientists need to isolate the toxin and test whether it triggers cardiac arrests.

Researchers have hypothesized that there is a second agent. Many of the victims showed high levels of barium, a heavy metal in the soil that seeps into mushrooms.

"There is a lot of work left to do," Fontaine said. "We really need additional lab investigations."

Problems with poisonous mushrooms are common throughout Asia, said Diderik De Vleeschauwer, a spokesman for the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization regional office in Thailand.

"Normally we expect people to have knowledge of what they can and can't eat. One would think there is indigenous knowledge available about what they can forage," he said. "But these are accidents that can happen."

Follow Yahoo! News on [Twitter](#), become a fan on [Facebook](#)

Related Searches: [u.s. centers for disease control and prevention](#) [cardiac arrest](#) [standard chinese](#)

Buzz up! |

More on China

[China jet makes emergency landing after bomb scare](#)

AFP

[AgBank's Hong Kong IPO hugely oversubscribed](#) AFP

[China says economic growth slowing](#) AP

[More »](#)

More...

Health Video: [Coping With Cancer: Sisters Create Helpful Book](#) CBS 2 / KCAL 9 Los Angeles

Health Video: [Mexico soon will require a prescription for antibiotics](#) 11 News Houston

Health Video: [Fighting Alzheimer's Disease](#) ABC News

226 Comments

Show: [Newest First](#) 

[Post a Comment](#)

Comments 1 - 10 of 226 [First](#) | [Prev](#) | [Next](#) | [Last](#)

Fffgfgf Poppy 40 minutes ago | [Report Abuse](#)

0 6

It's hard to find a good men in my town ,most of them like my money more than like me.ljust want to find my true love.so i uploaded my hot photos on deafromance *.* (°C0 M under the name of amanda330.It's the best club for seeking young or old girls. .maybe you are the one who i'm looking for!!!

[Reply](#)

Jimmy Henry 51 minutes ago | [Report Abuse](#)

0 0

It is dangerous to eat mushrooms of unknown variety. Most of it are toxic, while others may not be so, although it might havwe adverse side effects to the health. It may be nutritious, but the eater has to be aware of the peril of taking it. Better yet not to take it to avoid the risk.

[Reply](#)

Jimmy 2 hours ago | [Report Abuse](#)

0 2

we must find other food

[Reply](#)

Alpine 2 hours ago | [Report Abuse](#)

1 1

Asians are so smart. My favorite was a news story from a couple of years ago where some Chinese found fossilized dinosaur bones and thought they were dragon bones so they ground them up and cooked them for their kids thinking they would get some benefit from it. Lol.Google: "Chinese villagers eat dinosaur bones".

[Reply](#)

Guest 2 hours ago | [Report Abuse](#)

2 0

Because its a very big place and populated with many persons. In the poorer areas they would not rely on the media for information which would perhaps the best forum for information rather than word of mouth handed down by family members over years. I think the government there should play a role in this.

[Reply](#)

Guest 3 hours ago | [Report Abuse](#)

1 0

This is unfortunate. I also love mushrooms and had a close call with them. Still eat them but only those prepared by those who know the difference. Perhaps those mentioned in this article contained toxins not able to cause cardiac arrests but could act as a catalyst with something else.

[Reply](#)

Nelson C 3 hours ago | [Report Abuse](#)

4 1

This must be an international hoax ... 400 deaths in a billion+ population ... more die of AIDS, Flu, bicycle crashes in China each week ... not a significant number ... in the U>S> more die of aspirin

reactions ... and 5 years to track it down ... gotta be a hoax ... China would never allow such a meaningless statistically insignificant study to showcase their inept disease control and monitoring competence.

[Reply](#)

Darrell 3 hours ago | [Report Abuse](#)

4 3

To those of you that don't like us right-wing rednecks, big deal. My mother taught me how to forage for food in the wild first, then my Boy Scout handbook taught me more. When in the military I learned more about the subject in survival school, to the point that I could gain weight in the field. These Chinese did not learn these things because the commie government doesn't think it necessary to educate their population. Education creates a people that wants freedom; can't have that now can we? Ignorant populations around the world are that way by choice. All people groups have had the opportunity to be as great as the USA and educate themselves. We are not responsible for the poverty and ignorance of the world. The principles of Christianity and the prosperity thereof have always been available to all.

[Replies \(1\)](#)

Doctor Anunaki 4 hours ago | [Report Abuse](#)

6 2

This is a sad story, have some compassion ! Life in remote villages is different from the luxury of supermarkets just a few minutes away ... It is good that the authorities are working and finding solutions. If I can not say something good or helpful, better not to say anything.

[Reply](#)

George 5 hours ago | [Report Abuse](#)

7 13

Wow, all of you flamer Obama haters are frakin retarded for looking for every possible place to post random garbage that has NOTHING to do with the actual articles.
Doubt you have ANY idea what wild mushrooms are other than the sliced ones at your Sizzler salad bar.
Die

[Replies \(2\)](#)

Comments 1 - 10 of 226 [First](#) | [Prev](#) | [Next](#) | [Last](#)

Post a Comment

[Sign in](#) to post a comment, or [Sign up](#) for a free account.

Most Viewed - Health

[Tiny mushrooms blamed for 400 deaths in SW China](#) AP

[Experimental diet pill shows promise, little risk](#) AP

[Brain Grows Quickest in Areas Where Apes, Humans Vary: Study](#) HealthDay

[Study: Many docs don't blow whistle on colleagues](#) AP

[New Pill Found to Cut Weight With Few Side Effects: Study](#) HealthDay

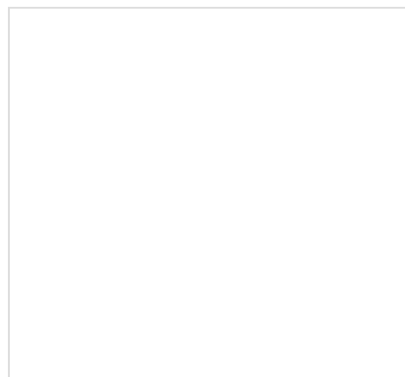
[All Most Viewed »](#)

Daily Features

[Opinions & Editorials: Diverse views on news from the right, left, and center.](#)

[All Comics »](#)

[All Opinion »](#)



Elsewhere on the Web

[ABC News: WATCH: Fat and Forgetful](#)

[NPR: Researcher Dispels Notion Music Can Get Kids High](#)

[Time.com: Avandia Stays on the Market, But For How Long?](#)

[Home](#) | [U.S.](#) | [Business](#) | [World](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Sports](#) | [Tech](#) | [Politics](#) | [Science](#) | [Health](#) | [Tr](#)

[NEWS SERVICES](#) | [RSS](#) | [News Alerts](#) | [Weather Alerts](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Help](#) | [F](#)

Copyright © 2010 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. The information contained in the AP News report may not be published, b authority of The Associated Press.

Copyright © 2010 Yahoo! Inc. All rights reserved. [Questions or Comments](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [About Our Ads](#) | [T](#)