

Correspondence

Biological Warfare

TO THE EDITOR: I read with great interest the article by Lesho et al,¹ as the history of biological warfare is one of my areas of particular interest. I noticed a few minor errors in their report, however, that I wish to correct here for your readership.

I am not aware of any reports of the intentional dissemination of variola (smallpox) through contaminated fomites occurring during the American Revolutionary War, although such actions had already proven the efficacy of this practice in the French and Indian War,²⁻⁴ and could possibly have been repeated. In 1763, Sir Jeffrey Amherst, the commander of British forces in North America, wrote to Colonel Henry Bouquet, suggesting that it "be contrived to send the small pox among those disaffected tribes of Indians" threatening Fort Pitt in Pennsylvania. Even before their correspondence resulted in a deliberate and official plan, Captain Simeon Ecuyer, Fort Pitt's commander, reported a smallpox outbreak and had begun distributing contaminated blankets and handkerchiefs to the Native Americans.²⁻⁴

The second, but much more subtle error, is that the bacterial simulant dispersed in the New York City subway system in the 1960s was *Bacillus subtilis* var *globigii*,^{2,4,5} not *B globi*. This was erroneously reported as *B globii* by Robertson³ (referenced by Lesho et al) and a simple typographical or transcription error would result in *B globi*.

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