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Sommario/riassunto

The past decade has seen mounting global concern regarding viral outbreaks such as SARS, avian influenza and West Nile virus. In 2004 and 2005, reports of bird-to-human, and possible human-to-human, transmissions of the H5N1 influenza viruses raised fears that these viruses could cause a pandemic on the scale of the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918. Previous to this, a novel coronavirus had been identified as the aetiological agent of the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), a new respiratory viral disease that emerged at the end of 2002 and caused profound disturbances in over 30 countries

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