

Hello, and welcome back. I'm Jim Tedder in Washington. Today we will help you improve your American English while giving you some new information about medicines. This is the kind of thing that may save lives.

Then we turn to the world of American politics. The United States has never had a woman President. Could Hillary Clinton become the first one? Stay with us and hear what the experts are saying.

As It Is is coming your way from Washington.

Most vaccines must be kept in a cool place all during the time when they are being transported and used. That is a big problem in some developing countries where electricity and transportation are not always available.

Some non-governmental organizations are urging drug makers to investigate whether their vaccines can be shipped safely at room temperature. One such group, Doctors Without Borders, believes that room temperature vaccines – vaccines that are outside what has been called the “cold chain” – will reach more people. Anna Matteo has the story.

The “cold chain” requires that vaccines be kept in a cool environment, with no changes in temperature, until they reach the end user. This “cold chain” is supposed to keep the medicine effective and stop it from going bad.

But the group Doctors Without Borders says the cold chain leads to vaccine shortages. And it warns these shortages result in 20 percent of children below the age of one going without their vaccinations each year.

Kate Elder serves as a vaccine advisor to the group. She says that because most vaccines are produced by Western drug makers, keeping them cold is not a problem in developed countries. The problems start, she adds, when you try to provide these medicines in other countries.

“But when you get into context like Chad and Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, where electricity is scarce and where roads are very poor and transportation very difficult, it becomes a huge challenge to keep these relatively fragile commodities cold all the way through to areas where kids need them.”

So Doctors Without Borders is urging drug makers to test vaccines to see whether they can be kept at temperatures up to 40 degrees Celsius.

One vaccine that stays effective at higher temperatures is MenAfriVac. It is used to prevent meningitis-A in children in African countries where meningitis is a big problem. MenAfriVac is effective without refrigeration equipment for up to four days.

Another such vaccine is the tetanus toxoid vaccine from the Serum Institute of India. A research group from France recently tested the tetanus toxoid vaccine in Chad. The researchers found that it too worked outside the “cold chain.” It stayed effective for up to one month at temperatures up to 40 degrees. And it gave the same level of protection as the vaccine kept in a strict “cold chain.”

Kate Elder says the results suggest that more immunization drugs probably do not need refrigeration all the time to be safe and effective.

“The number of these vaccines might actually be more thermo-stable than what they are labeled for at refrigeration requirements of two to eight degrees Celsius.

So, what we are doing is pushing the manufacturers - the companies that make these products - to make sure that we can use them to that utmost thermo-stable potential.”

Doctors Without Borders is urging drug makers to lead this effort – an effort that shows some vaccines may be safely transported and used when stored outside the “cold chain.” This effort will lead to vaccines that can be approved for use in parts of the world that do not have dependable refrigeration – places that usually have the greatest need.

I’m Anna Matteo.

Will It Be “Madam President”?

The next presidential election in the United States is still more than two years away. But any discussion of possible candidates among Democratic Party activists begins with former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. She has a huge lead in studies of likely voters. Just the possibility of her candidacy is having a major effect on the race for the presidency.

Hillary Clinton may not yet be a candidate for president. But she has been busy giving speeches, singing with school children and preparing to become a grandmother. Her daughter Chelsea recently announced that she and her husband expect their first child later this year.

Yet Hillary Clinton has said little about her political future. But in her speeches, she is a strong supporter of women's rights.

"I believe that advancing the rights, opportunities and full participation of women and girls here at home and around the world is the great unfinished business of the 21st Century."

John Sides is a member of the Department of Political Science at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. He says Hillary Clinton would be a major political force if she seeks the Democratic presidential nomination.

"She is probably as best-positioned to be the Democratic nominee in a year with no incumbent president as any recent Democratic nominee has been. So really the race is hers if she wants it."

But, he says the question is does she want to seek the nomination after her loss to Barack Obama in 2008?

“She is a known quantity to most voters. I do not think she has to worry about image management yet and ultimately it is just a question of whether she thinks she has the necessary stamina and the desire to actually pull this off.”

Stephen Hess studies politics for the Brookings Institution, a private, public-policy group in Washington. He says Hillary Clinton will be a political target if she decides to enter the race.

“If you are way out there everybody is shooting at you, gunning at your back, not only other possible candidates, but certainly the media. So she is in a very exposed position. On the other hand, a very good position is that she is raising a lot of money and that is very important in presidential politics.”

If Ms. Clinton is a candidate, she will face more questions about her actions during and after the 2012 attack on the American diplomatic offices in Benghazi, Libya. John Boehner is the speaker of the House of Representatives.

“And when it comes to Benghazi, we have got four Americans who are dead and their families deserve the truth about what happened and the administration refuses to tell them the truth.”

But that incident seems to have done little to hurt her popularity, says Karlyn Bowman of the American Enterprise Institute.

“I have been reviewing all the polls ever, all the poll questions ever asked on Hillary Clinton, and there are probably several thousands of them, at least. And I just finished review, and it is a remarkably favorable picture when you look at the whole picture over time since 1992.”

The former Secretary of State wrote about her years as America’s top diplomat. That book, called *Hard Choices*, will be published in June.

And here is a brief history lesson for you. On this date in 1915, the man who became America's most famous baseball player, Babe Ruth, hit his first home run. At the time he was playing for the Boston Red Sox.

On this date in 1937, the dirigible ...or big passenger carrying balloon ...the Hindenburg, exploded at Lakehurst, New Jersey. It was the biggest news of the day.

And American actor Orson Wells was born on this day in 1915. His film "Citizen Kane" is considered one of the best ever made.

We have to move aside for more Learning English programs, and then world news at the beginning of the hour. I'm Jim Tedder in Washington, and you are listening to VOA.

