

August 2008
Issue 5

R.A.M. Newsletter

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Rotarians Against Malaria

Chairman's Message

My Rotary friends and friends of Rotary,

"...it is timely we come out from under that 'mushroom' and communicate our successes to others", and, "It is intended this quarterly newsletter will provide the communication link that will assist in ensuring a better informed reader." (RAM Newsletter August 2007).

What progress have we made in the past 12 months? What strategies are being developed to improve our communication even further?

Our goal is to achieve a newsletter circulation of 200 by June 2010. The first newsletter was distributed in August 2007 with a circulation of just under 115; by 30 June 2008 that number had increased to 149. We are aware that a number of districts are posting the RAM Newsletter to their website. Accordingly, it is probable that the readership already exceeds our target. I encourage all districts to

seriously consider posting this newsletter to their website.

We have made the decision to develop our own stand-alone website. Pre-development planning has commenced and is well advanced. It is anticipated the actual site development will commence in early September 2008. All appropriate linkages will be included, particularly, Rotary Australia World Community Service (RAWCS), the RAM Papua New Guinea website, and the Solomon Islands RAM website.

The World Health Organisation has recognised 25 April as World Malaria Day. As this date has special significance in both Australia and New Zealand, we consider the week following Anzac Day is a practical and sensible alternative. We have selected 30 April as the date on which due recognition should occur. We have named this day in Australia, Malaria Awareness Day. This is the same title as one of the relevant titles used in

the USA. Strategies are being developed to enable all 23 Australian districts and nearly 1,200 clubs to participate in whatever way they choose in April 2009.

Our May 2008 Conference confirmed the benefit of having clinical input in our deliberations and suggested we continue to cater for this aspect in future conferences. We have been able to take this point a step further in that a number of highly recognised research institutes have readily indicated their willingness to be associated with RAM and have willingly and freely provided permission to include in our newsletter articles of interest emanating from their institutions.

It is apparent we have successfully improved our communication links over the past 12 months. We can look forward with a great deal of confidence to continued improvement during the next 12 months and beyond.

*PDG Bill Dethlefs
National Chairman*

OUR OBJECTIVE

"The prevention of mortality, and a reduction in morbidity and social and economic loss caused by malaria through a progressive improvement and strengthening of local and national capabilities in malaria control."

Vivax malaria strain not benign

A Northern Territory researcher has discovered the vivax strain of malaria – previously believed to be benign – is fatal.

The report's author, Ric Price from the Menzies School of Health Research, says there are 400 million vivax malaria cases every year in Asia.

"This highlights that what we thought was a benign infection (but) actually has huge implications both economically and also in terms of mortality, so this raises the agenda for people who are trying to fund and support malaria control programs that this requires a lot of attention and a lot of funding and support."

He hopes the findings will ramp up global efforts to treat and prevent the infection.

The strain is passed from human to human by mosquitoes, and up to 400 million cases are diagnosed in Asia every year.

Mr. Price says re-infection of patients causes severe malaria and death, and says that is a problem given the vivax strain is becoming more resistant to the drugs used to treat it.

"We have to think of new treatments and there are new treatments that can treat this very effectively."

"One of the problems you have with vivax is that you treat the blood stage in the blood, but it also goes to sleep in your liver and comes back months later, even years later. That's very difficult to treat. There are treatments but they're not very good."

Source: The above article was published by the Darwin Menzies School of Health Research

DID YOU KNOW

Quinine was first used to treat malaria in Rome in 1631. During the 1600s malaria was endemic to the swamps and marshes surrounding the city of Rome. Over time, malaria was responsible for the death of several Popes, many cardinals, and countless citizens of Rome.

The Global Fund

The Global Fund is a unique global public/private partnership dedicated to attracting and disbursing additional resources to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. This partnership between governments, civil society, the private sector and affected communities represents a new approach to international health financing. The Global Fund works in close collaboration with other bilateral and multilateral organizations to supplement existing efforts dealing with the three diseases.

The Global Fund provides more than 20 percent of international funding to fight AIDS, as well as two-thirds of international funding to fight tuberculosis and three-quarters of the international funding against malaria.

Since its creation in 2002, the Global Fund has become the main source of finance for programs to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, with approved funding of US\$10.7 billion for more than 550 programs in 136 countries. So far, programs supported by the Global Fund have averted more than 2 million deaths by providing AIDS treatment for 1.4 million people, TB treatment for 3.3 million people, and by distributing 46 million insecticide-treated bed nets for the prevention of malaria.

Malaria Awareness Day

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has recognised 25 April as World Malaria Day. RAM believes that we should also develop this concept as an opportunity to promote what Rotary in Australia is doing about this devastating disease.

As this date has special significance in both Australia and New Zealand, we consider the week immediately following Anzac Day is a practical and sensible alternative. We have selected 30 April as the date on which due recognition should occur. We have named this day in Australia, Malaria Awareness Day. This is the same title as one of the relevant titles used in the USA.

Many months ago District 9800 Public Relations team offered RAM their services to co-ordinate a national malaria awareness effort. Planning is proceeding very well and a number of strategies have already been agreed for further development.

Some ideas already in the pipe-line are:

- DG's have been requested to consider the inclusion of malaria in their PR Grant Application to RI with such funds

being used in their districts to promote the awareness of the ravages of malaria throughout the world;

- AusAid has provided \$25 million for malaria in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. They will be approached to lend their support;
- We will be approaching other groups involved with malaria and inviting them to be partners in the project;
- The Prime Minister will be requested to provide a message;
- The prime Australian focus will be the three countries forming part of Australian Districts – Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Timor Leste.

However, we are aware some clubs and districts focus their support on some other countries. The key element is public awareness of this dreadful disease;

- Utilisation of community service announcements, particularly with regional television stations but with all channels if possible;

- Suitable sponsorship will be investigated;
- The public to be encouraged to donate \$10 for a bed net with the possibility of tax deductibility being available;

Other ideas are being considered. However, we would appreciate any idea you have being sent to me at dethlefs@hotmail.net.au for further consideration. A brief outline would be appreciated.

Finally, we need your assistance to ensure success. A number of people from a variety of districts have already accepted responsibility for key aspects of the project. If you are interested in being more directly involved, please let me know as soon as possible.

It is anticipated that more detailed information regarding Malaria Awareness Day (MAD) will be incorporated in the next RAM Newsletter which is due for distribution late November 2008.

*PDG Bill Dethlefs
National RAM Chairman and
MAD Project Committee
Chairman*

Unique malaria project scoops international award.

A unique drug-discovery project using marine invertebrates from the Great Barrier Reef as the basis of a potential treatment for Malaria was today (2 June 2008) named 2007 Project of the Year by the Geneva-based Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV).

The project based at Griffith University's Eskitis Institute for Cell and Molecular Therapies has identified a unique chemical structure that specifically targets and kills the malaria parasite. This class of compound is being moved rapidly forward in the drug development pathway.

The inaugural award was presented at the 8th Annual MMV Stakeholders Meeting and symposium in Ghana on May 31, attended by 150 of the world's leading malaria control researchers and organisations.

The team has been recognised for bringing a new approach to discover compounds from nature. The process captures those compounds with distinct drug potential and tests only those components. This ensures the active

compounds can be further developed by the normal drug development methods.

The team was also recognised for using sophisticated cellular imaging to develop a new assay to detect death of the malaria parasite.

Eskitis Institute Director and project leader Dr Ron Quinn said his team "felt tremendous pride in being chosen amongst so many excellent projects for this award."

"There are enormous untapped resources in our environment – our aim is to use cutting-edge science and technology to uncover those and use them for the benefit of the global community," he said.

MMV Chief Scientific Officer Dr Timothy Wells said "the identification of this exciting new class of compounds is exactly the reason MMV invests in natural product screening."

"This cutting-edge research only confirms what malaria history has already demonstrated – that some of the best medicines come from our natural environment." he said.

World Health Organisation figures estimate a child dies of malaria every 30 seconds, adding up to more than 1 million deaths each year. While most deaths occur in Africa, WHO predicts climate change may increase the geographic spread of the disease.

The MMV collaboration is one of several key projects underway at the Eskitis Institute. The team spent 14 years compiling 'Nature Bank' that contains over 200,000 pre-fractionated samples containing potential drug compounds from plants and animals collected from oceans and forests in Australia, Papua New Guinea, and China.

The goal is to locate the initial chemical leads that can then be developed into next-generation drugs.

Source: The above article was written by Jeanette Langan and included in Griffith News.

Authorisation for inclusion in this newsletter is by kind permission of Professor Ron Quinn, Director, Griffith University's Eskitis Institute for Cell and Molecular Therapies.

Congratulations

We extend our sincere congratulations to George McLelland who was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in this year's Queen's Birthday Honours List.

This unassuming recipient has been recognised for service to the community, namely his extraordinary volunteer contribution to Australian Doctors International (ADI), Rotarians Against Malaria (RAM), Rotary Club of Manly D9680 Sydney, Hope for the Children Foundation, as well as a number of other local community groups.

George, a retired accountant, is currently the Vice-President of ADI.

Extraordinary fund-raising success

In some years, the partners of District Governors have had different projects that they supported. Some of them, although worthwhile and rewarding, have been time-consuming, and involved the DG Partner in a lot of organisational skills, both physically and financially. I felt I would like to use the time during my husband's year as Governor, to contribute to a valuable project of Rotary.

In 2007, Dick and I went to the International Convention in Salt Lake City and attended an excellent seminar presented by a team of experts from around the world, all of whom were involved in the fight against malaria. The key to the success of this fight is the provision of bed nets, which are not only very effective but relatively inexpensive.

This gave me the idea that encouraging District 9810 to get behind the fight against malaria would be ideal during the year 2007-08 in which my husband was District Governor. It is a simple to administer and easy to promote project, and has a major advantage in that I wasn't sent goods which needed storage and costly freighting. It was a matter of promoting RAM on all occasions, and then collecting cheques and passing them on,

which needed minimal administration.

In previous years I had noted the custom in our District that the wife of a District Governor was often presented with a bouquet on the occasion of his official Club visit. This is a lovely idea, but as I would often not be at home to enjoy them I suggested that rather than a gift of flowers to me, I would prefer the Club to make a donation to Rotarians Against Malaria.

This idea was shared with Dick's Assistant Governors so they could advise their Clubs in advance of our visit. The Clubs received the idea with enthusiasm, and supported it in a number of different ways which often resulted in a larger donation than the value of a bouquet of flowers:

- A cheque instead of the usual flowers.
- Money raised from the Sergeant's session.
- Money raised from the Club Raffle.
- One club held an impromptu auction.
- Separate larger donations from Clubs.
- Youth Exchange students organised a raffle at District Conference raising \$2,500.
- A fundraising evening by one Club where

RAM shared in the proceeds.

One further development was that I was asked how non-Rotary groups could contribute. One Rotarian said that her fellow school teachers usually organised a Kris Kringle each Christmas. At their suggestion, they made a contribution to RAM instead of giving gifts to each other.

During the last year, I have taken every opportunity to keep Rotarians up-to-date with progress, and inform them how the fund has been growing, emphasising the importance and affordability of the bed nets, and what a difference to families they make. It only took a couple of minutes at Club and Cluster meetings, and at District Conference to give this information. From time to time an update was given in the DG's regular newsletters.

So, how much did District 9810 contribute this year? The total district donations was \$25,586 of which \$16,121 are donations made at my various visits or sent to me soon after. I thank all the Clubs and individuals who gave generously to achieve this figure.

Sue Garner, District 9810 Governor's partner 2007-08

Reference Books

The May 2008 RAM Conference suggested we include, at various times, in our Newsletter a list of reference books that may be of interest to the reader. The following books may assist in satisfying your interest while at the same time expand your understanding of this dreadful disease.

- Malaria Frontline: Australian Army Research During World War II, by Tony Sweeney.
- Taking the Mystery out of Malaria, by Kath Donovan and Bernie Hudson.
- Malaria Dreams: An African Adventure, by Stuart Stevens.
- Malaria Research Trends, by Devin A. Flanigan.
- The Making of a Tropical Disease: A short History of Malaria (Johns Hopkins Biographies of Disease), by Randall M. Packard.
- Taking the Mystery out of Malaria, by Donovan and Hudson



The Gates Foundation Grants 200 million to Malaria Research and Control Programs

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

recently awarded 13 new grants, totaling almost US \$200 million, to help fight malaria.

This new funding adds to the Foundation's existing portfolio of grants that support initiatives to strengthen existing malaria control programmes and to pursue a wide range of research on new strategies to prevent and treat the disease. Among these new grants:

\$42 million to the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine to identify ways to optimize delivery of artemisinin combination therapy

\$37 million to the Medicines for Malaria Venture to accelerate the development of effective, affordable malaria drugs

\$30 million to the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine to improve the control and treatment of malaria in pregnancy in Africa, Asia and Latin America

\$15 million to PATH for additional support to the Malaria Control and Evaluation Program in Africa (MACEPA)

\$9 million to the Seattle Biomedical Research Institute for research on a malaria vaccine for pregnant women

\$3 million to The Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR) to study ways to prevent resistance to artemisinin

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Contributions and comments are welcome.