

RAM NEWSLETTER

Volume 2 Number 1

My Rotary Friends and Friends of Rotary.

When I sat down to think about this, my first Newsletter since assuming the role as your Chairman, I thought about making a few changes. How about a new name? Then, being the unimaginative person that I am, I decided, why change what works. I did decide to change the format and appearance just a little, and this is it.

It would be wrong of me to start anything new without first paying tribute to the work of PDG Bill Dethlefs over the past three years. Repeating what I said at the RAM National Conference at Caboolture in May, just look at what was achieved in his term as Chairman - and let me stress that the list isn't all inclusive -

- Membership of the Pacific Islands Region Multi-country Coordinating Mechanism
- Celebration of Malaria
- Awareness Day
- Our new website
- A new logo
- The Newsletter
- Development of a RAM Procedures Document.

We've also seen great growth in our mailing lists. Many more people, Rotarians and non-Rotarians are interested in learning about what we're doing.
PDG Bill certainly set the bar high.

I also said at the Conference that I didn't intend to step in making wholesale changes. Without getting into too many clichés, I firmly believe in the saying if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

I do have some ideas and will share them with you

We must develop and, where necessary, strengthen the *Adopt A Village* program. Yes! Because of the massive support from both the Global Fund and the Australian Government, *Adopt A Village* can't continue in its original form. This is where the development and strengthening process comes in. We basically know where we're going in the Solomons: the challenge is to determine our actions in Papua New Guinea. That is, I believe, our number one priority. In that regard we also must ensure that the mechanics of the adoption process work smoothly. By this I mean I want to do everything possible to help the Rotarians in Port Moresby speed up the adoption recognition process. Please, and I must stress this, don't think I'm levelling criticism here as I'm as aware as any of us of just how much work is being done by so few people in Port Moresby in the fight against malaria and know that the adoption recognition process is a pretty small part of what they do. However it is an important part and I want to do everything I can to ensure it's expedited.

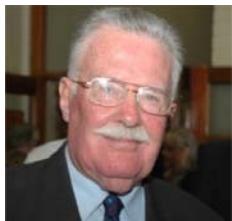
I would like to see support for RAM and its activities widened. It might be wishful thinking, but I propose trying again to get financial support from the corporate sector, especially pharmaceutical companies. I'm not going to rush into this but will first undertake some research into what these companies are doing now. I'll then target my approaches.

Another item on my wish list is for RAM to become increasingly involved with Australian Rotary Health. Many of you will remember the young woman who spoke at our annual conference a few years ago – Leia Hee, a PhD student at the Bosch Institute, University of Sydney. Leia was supported by Australian Rotary Health. I'd like to see more like her. Incidentally Leia is now Dr Leia Hee and has successfully completed the PhD she was working for when she spoke with us. Working with Australian Rotary Health is an expensive exercise but, in recent time, we've seen some very large donations from clubs and, in cases such as those, research may be an suitable and accepted objective.

I don't believe in making work for Rotarians who already give a great deal of their time to Rotarians Against Malaria, but if at all possible, I would like to broaden our communication system. I want to get the message to more Rotarians. One example of how this can be done is what's being done in District 9820 with its RAM Newsletter. I would like to receive any other Newsletters that District RAM Chairs may produce.

Ian Sayers
Chairman

Meet the new RAM Chairman



Ian Sayers was born Victoria but grew up and was educated in New South Wales. He is a sixth generation Australian, his forebear arriving in the Fourth Fleet in 1792.

Ian has been a Rotarian for twenty five years and is a member of the Rotary Club of Belconnen.

He was District Governor of RI District 9710 in 2002/2003. At the District level he has been Chair of the Rotarians Against Malaria (RAM) and Literacy Committees. He was District Trainer for two years. At present he is a member of the District RAM Committee. He is the Zone 8 Board member on the Rotary Global History Fellowship. Ian is a MPH and TRF Benefactor.

He spent many years in the Australian Defence Forces, mainly Army Reserve. He was awarded the Efficiency Decoration in 1968. He retired in 1972.

It was whilst serving in Papua New Guinea in the 1950s that he became aware of the ravages of malaria. He had malaria on a number of occasions after returning to Australia and it was because of this, and his Papua New Guinea experience, that he became involved in Rotarians Against Malaria.

Ian and Laurel have been married for over 50 years. They have two adult children and two grandchildren. Laurel is a member of the Rotary Club of Belconnen and is a Past President of the Rotary Club of Ginninderra. She is a PHF and a TRF Benefactor.

Experts roll out malaria map, urge mosquito study

The following is the summary of a paper published in a recent issue of the journal *PLoS Neglected Tropical Diseases*.

For those who might like to read the research paper in full, it is –

Guerra CA, Howes RE, Patil AP, Gething PW, Van Boeckel TP, et al. 2010 *The International Limits and Population at Risk of Plasmodium vivax Transmission in 2009*. PLoS Negl Trop Dis 4(8): e774. doi:10.1371/journal.pntd.0000774

Nearly 3 billion people, or two-fifths of the world's population, were at risk of contracting malaria in 2009 and closer study of the mosquito's life cycle is needed to combat the disease, researchers said in two reports.

In the first study, scientists mapped out the geographical spread of the *Plasmodium vivax* -- the most common parasite that causes malaria -- using reported cases of malaria and details on temperature and aridity.

"We estimate that the global population at risk of *P. vivax* malaria in 2009 was 2.85 billion people. Regionally, the great majority of this population (91 percent) resides in central and southeast Asian countries," wrote Simon Hay, a zoologist at the University of Oxford who co-authored the study.

P. vivax remains the most widely distributed human malaria parasite even after a century of development and control," he wrote, replying to questions from Reuters.

However, chances of infection by this parasite is low across Africa because of a genetic trait that protects mostly people of African origin.

But transmission of the parasite does occur in the continent and remains a concern for travellers and people who do not carry the trait, the researchers said.

The malaria atlas was published on in the journal *PLoS Neglected Tropical Diseases*.

In 2008, there were 247 million cases of malaria worldwide and nearly one million deaths, mostly among children.

Knowing where the *P. vivax* thrives is critical so that plans can be made to control it, wrote Carlos Guerra, another author of the atlas and also from the University of Oxford.

Hay said the parasite, which is carried by the female *Anopheles* mosquito, is sensitive to environmental factors.

"Low temperatures delay the development of the parasite in the mosquito and if this time exceeds the

life span of the vector (mosquito), then transmission is not possible," Hay said.

"Aridity acts mainly on the vector by increasing mortality through desiccation and also by limiting the availability of suitable breeding sites (i.e. collections of water)."

In the second paper, another team of researchers said vector control measures such as insecticide-treated nets and sprays have not been able to break the transmission cycle of the Plasmodium falciparum, another parasite that causes malaria in the most endemic parts of Africa and the Pacific. It is regarded as a more dangerous cause of malaria as it has the highest rates of complications and death.

"Global commitment to malaria eradication necessitates a corresponding long-term commitment to vector ecology," wrote Gerry Killeen from the Ifakara Health Institute in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and colleagues in the journal PLoS Medicine.

"Priority areas will include understanding aspects of the mosquito life cycle beyond the blood feeding processes which

News from the Clubs

Hopefully this can become a feature of the RAM Newsletter, so Clubs if you have something interesting to report on your RAM activities, please send it to Ian Sayers and we'll try to publish it for you.

Thanks to RR Tom Shanahan, District 9820 RAM Chairman and the Rotary Club of Frankston Sunrise RAM representatives Laurie Warfe and Peter Stacey for the following item. It's been abridged slightly and not all the excellent photographs could be included for space and file size reasons.

Rotary Club of Frankston Sunrise RAM Swim 2010

The 2010 Rotarians Against Malaria (RAM) swim was held on the morning of 28 March. The swim usually coincides with Clean Up Australia Day, the first Sunday in March, but was a little late this year. The weather was ideal with a gentle off shore breeze and the bay was flat calm. The water temperature was still fairly high and was clear and there were no jellyfish or other challenging marine life present - the local resident shark, recently seen cruising close to shore, did not attend (luckily). The Club was fortunate to have many helpers showing up on the morning to ensure the event went smoothly. Also, the District 9820 RAM Chairman, Tom Shanahan, attended to lend the official Rotary hand. Thanks to all the Sunrise Rotarians and Tom for braving the Autumn chill and contributing to the success of the event. Thanks also to the Frankston Yacht Club for lending us the yachting buoys and to Wise Choice Foods who catered for the BBQ.



There were 42 swimmers registered to compete – a record for the Club.

All swimmers were experienced and finished the 1 km course in good time.

Funds raised on the day totalled \$665.00. This amount will be forwarded to the District RAM representative with our best wishes for continued success in this extremely worthwhile Rotary project. The RAM swim will be held again next year in March. Greater effort will be made to advertise the event and increase the number of competitors.

Again, many thanks to all participants and helpers for making the swim very successful.

Fulbright Scholar to research military health threat



University of Queensland PhD student Major Alyson Auliff will use a prestigious Fulbright Scholarship to help in the battle against malaria, a major cause of Australian military casualties. Major Auliff, a scientific officer in the Drug Resistance and Diagnostics Department at the Australian Army Malaria Institute and a PhD student in UQ's School of Population Health, was among 23 talented Australians awarded a Fulbright Scholarship at a ceremony in Hobart this evening. She will use the scholarship to further her research into beating resistance in malaria parasites.

Major Auliff's project will focus on developing a novel system to investigate the mechanism by which malaria parasites develop resistance to drugs and use this system to evaluate new drugs.

The scholarship will enable Major Auliff to travel to the United States to conduct part of her research at the University of South Florida (USF) and at the Walter Reed Armed Institute of Research.

She said malaria was responsible for many deaths annually in tropical regions of the world and was a major cause of military casualties in Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel who were deployed to these regions.

"Although Australia is malaria-free it is still a public health concern that should be taken seriously, especially in Queensland," she said.

"Imported cases of malaria into Australia occur regularly and occasionally local transmission of malaria occurs because the mosquito that transmits malaria exists in North Queensland."

This is a shortened version of a story published, on-line, in *UQ News*

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."

Sponsorship

We acknowledge and sincerely thank ***Vestergaard Frandsen*** for their most generous financial support of Malaria Awareness Day 2010.

Vestergaard Frandsen philosophy includes the development of innovative products that prevent the transmission of waterborne and vector-borne diseases in developing countries. They are especially interested in addressing a class of diseases called the Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTD), which kill many of the most vulnerable people on earth.

Turning commitment into action, amongst the products they have developed is PermaNet – a Long Lasting Insecticide Treated Mosquito Net.

*This newsletter has been produced by PDG Ian Sayers, Chairman RAM Committee (Australia),
Email: isa34235@bigpond.net.au
Contributions and comments are welcome.*