



RAM NEWSLETTER

Volume 2 Number 3

My Rotary Friends and Friends of Rotary.

What a start to the year! Dreadful flooding in Queensland and in parts of New South Wales and Victoria, Cyclone Yasi in North Queensland, and the bushfires in Western Australia. On behalf of everyone involved with Rotarians Against Malaria, I hope nobody receiving this Newsletter was affected, or had anyone belonging to them affected. Rotarians, like all Australians in times of major disasters, dig deep to assist. The unprecedented scale of these disasters, and the number of appeals being conducted, including from some Australian Rotary Districts, will impact on our *Adopt A Village* program. In the short term, the level of our donations will be affected. I feel, and am sure you'll agree, that we have to live with this. We will continue to do what we do now to raise funds for, and create awareness of, our *Adopt A Village* program, but may have to accept some disappointment. So be it!

Malaria Awareness Day will be recognized by Australian Rotarians on 30 April 2011. Some notes on the history of World Malaria Day and our Malaria Awareness Day follow.

Australia, and in fact, the world, lost an eminent scientist with the death of Emeritus Professor Frank Fenner in November. I've included some notes on the late Professor Fenner extracted from a variety of sources, but mainly a recent edition of the *ANU Reporter*.

The majority who will read this Newsletter are well aware of the ravages of malaria. An example of how we can never afford to become complacent was reported in a recent issue of the Pacific Malaria Initiative Support Centre's *This week in malaria*. The author of the article, which follows below, refers to the resistance of the malaria parasite to the drug chloroquine. The last issue of RAM Newsletter included an item about the Australian National University's Dr Rowena Martin and her award of the L'Oréal Australia for Women in Science Fellowships for 2010. The last issue of the ANU Reporter contains an article about Dr Martin's research. In some words from this article she is "... aiming to reinvent chloroquine as a back-up for artemisinin." If you would like to hear Dr Martin speak go to – <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Eo3J5lXHcc>

PDG Peter Thomas, one of our Solomon Islands specialists, has provided a most interesting update on what's happening in that country. It's very heartening to read his report.

Very soon I'll be sending out information about Malaria Awareness Day Community Service Announcements. Look out for that.

Ian Sayers
Chairman

World Malaria Day 2011

The 31 January 2011 edition of Roll Back Malaria's newsletter, *Malaria in the News* contained the following press release. Everyone will be aware that, in deference to the significance of 25 April, ANZAC Day, in Australia, the National Rotarians Against Malaria Committee decided to recognise World Malaria Day on 30 April. We also decided to call it *Malaria Awareness Day*. The press release is reproduced verbatim as it gives some background to World Malaria Day.

"Achieving Progress and Impact"

Theme for World Malaria Day 2011

World Malaria Day was instituted by the World Health Assembly (WHA) at its 60th session in 2007. The day is commemorated every year on April 25 to create awareness about an ancient disease and the devastating impact it has on the lives of more than 3 billion people – half of humanity. World Malaria Day is an opportunity for the global development and health communities to intensify their efforts in providing access to affordable, safe and effective anti-malarial combination treatments worldwide, as well as protective insecticide treated nets and other preventive measures.

The commemoration of the fourth World Malaria Day – **WMD 2011** – marks a critical moment in time. At this stage, the Abuja Malaria Targets adopted in April 2000 should have been reached and Universal Coverage with all malaria interventions attained. WMD 2011 is the year in which significant progress is being assessed towards achieving near zero deaths by 2015.

In 2010 the global Roll Back Malaria Partnership focused on capturing the results of its collective efforts. Over the past twelve months, five reports have been published which document the progress made in

global malaria control and the impact that has been achieved in terms of coverage and lives saved. This series of reports, entitled "RBM Progress & Impact" will continue through to the end of 2011 when new data will be made available.

In keeping with this consolidated effort by the global malaria community to highlight the reported successes and the remaining challenges in malaria control today, and to maximize the impact of substantial investments for this preventable and treatable disease, RBM Partners have determined the following theme for WMD 2011:

"Achieving Progress and Impact".

Partners are encouraged to adopt and promulgate this theme in their respective advocacy activities, and to combine it with slogans which reflect the many areas of progress as well as the continuing challenges that still confront malaria endemic countries.

Vale: Emeritus Professor Frank Fenner



Picture courtesy ANU Reporter

Emeritus Professor Frank Fenner AC, CMG, MBE, FRS, FAA, died on 22 November 2010. As was stated in a tribute to him published in the latest ANU Reporter his death marked the final chapter in a life that had touched millions.

Professor Fenner, a really great scientist, environmentalist and humanist, played significant roles in malaria prevention, announced the end of smallpox and tackled a rabbit plague. I'm sure that most Australians who knew of Professor Fenner, remember him for the work he did on myxomatosis. Few would not have heard how he and some CSIRO colleagues deliberately inoculated themselves with the myxomatosis virus to refute perceptions that the virus was dangerous for humans.

Born in Ballarat, Victoria, but educated in Adelaide, South Australia, Frank Fenner studied geology and botany concurrently with medicine at Adelaide University. Graduating in 1938, he went on to study tropical medicine at the University of Sydney. At the outbreak of World War 2 he enlisted in the AIF, serving in the Middle East, New Guinea and Borneo. Shortly after a posting to Palestine, he erected a dressing station in a poor location and, in his words, was "transferred out of the field ambulance to corps headquarters because they thought that was probably a safer place for me".

His Army service was predominantly as a malariologist, reflecting his completion of the tropical medicine course at the University of Sydney before enlisting.

Returning from the Middle East, he was given responsibility for treating malaria in servicemen returning from Papua New Guinea. The hospital's transfusion sister, Bobbie Roberts, was reassigned to assist Frank Fenner. Days before going to Papua, Frank Fenner married her, beginning a 50-year partnership that lasted until Bobbie's death in 1995.

His malaria achievements, and success in reducing the casualty rate among the troops, recognised by an MBE in 1944, aroused his interest in infectious-disease research, leading to an appointment at the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute in Melbourne in 1946.

And the rest, as is said, is history. A great man and a great scientist who will be sadly missed

Malaria Outbreak in Remote PNG District

The following article that appeared in the Papua New Guinea *Post Courier On-Line* was flagged by the Pacific Malaria Initiative Support Centre's *This week in malaria* sent 2 Feb. It's a very timely reminder how critical it is for us to never get complacent. The article is reproduced as published.

Malaria destroys Karamui district

By Johnny Poiya

The bulk of drug supplies for the malaria outbreak in Karamui area, which has already claimed over 20 lives will be flown in today.

Provincial health officers from Kundiawa were deployed into the remote district together with the first

batch of drugs on a chartered aircraft on Wednesday, followed by local MP Posi Menai on Saturday. District administrator Joe Nopro yesterday said the whole of Karamui was under attack by the outbreak.

"We are still waiting for the latest news from our officers on the ground as the area is so remote with no communication link. From the little information we get, the drugs sent in from the government stores has already run out." he said.

He said the Joint District Planning and Budget Priority Committee held a crisis meeting last week and made available K68,000 for aircraft charter and purchase of more drugs to reach out to all the households.

Mr Nopro said: "We already bought K38,000 worth of malarial drugs and will be flown in tomorrow (today). These drugs will be distributed throughout the whole of Karamui. To do that, the aircraft will have to fly to all the seven remote airstrips."

The affected areas are Aiya on the foot of Mt Carter on the Eastern Highlands, Gulf and Chimbu provincial border, Noru near Pangia on the Southern Highlands border, Bomai near the Western Highlands border, Kiribari, Meosorida, Negapo and Wosimaru.

"Because of the remoteness of the district, news of the outbreak reached authorities about a week later. But the response was swift with drugs from the government stores flown in quickly and more drugs purchased by the district administration will be flown in on Monday (today)." Mr Nopro said.

"This is a big crisis for my people and I have to be there to see them receive their drugs and provide further help wherever necessary." Mr Menai said.

The Chimbu Provincial Emergency and Disaster office have reported the outbreak and are expected to meet with people from the National Planning Office this week.

A malaria training conducted for journalists last week in Port Moresby by the Population Services International revealed that chloroquine, the main drug used in fighting malaria in PNG, has developed resistance to the disease in the mid 1980s.

A new drug, the first-line anti-malarial used in the world today, artemether-lumefantrine (artemisini-based combination therapy) to be known locally as Mala-1 will be brought into PNG and be in use by April this year.

Global warming is one factor contributing to the higher altitude parts of PNG being susceptible to malaria.

In a weeklong training by the National Agriculture Research Institute in Mt Hagen last year, Dr A. Ramakrishna said: "Warmer temperatures are also causing increase of malaria and experts are now predicting that epidemic malaria will be prevalent in the PNG highlands by 2030."

SOLOMON ISLANDS UPDATE

It has been a wet and windy "wet season". Heavy rain across all islands, leaving large areas of swampy ground providing ideal breeding sites for the dreaded mosquito. The storms continue.

Albino Bobogare, the Director of the Vector Borne Disease Control Program, reports that the distribution of long life insecticide treated bed nets has progressed very well, with more than 200,000 nets now in use in villages right across the country. Distribution continues as weather conditions allow.

Careful monitoring by malaria workers is providing vital information allowing intensive spraying of buildings in "hot spot" areas showing high incidents of malaria



Tools being handed over to the Village Environment Committee at Maravovo Village on the Guadalcanal plains just east of Honiara., as part of the *Healthy Village Program*."

Many villages have formed environmental committees to encourage people to clean up mosquito breeding areas. RAM has supplied tools (shovels, wheelbarrows, picks etc) to many of these committees. Donations from Clubs and individuals are providing the funds so vital to make this essential activity a reality.

Cleaning up in parts of the city of Honiara is not so easy. Urban communities are not so willing to come together and do the hard physical work needed to make a difference. RAM has made available, to the Honiara City Council Health Department, a substantial quantity of the latest and safest lavacide that will provide a protective barrier in water sources around the city. Again, generous donations from Rotary Clubs have allowed RAM to assist.

It is usual to see a spike in number of detected malaria cases at this time of the year, BUT the good news is that it hasn't happened this year so far. The use of bednets, intensive spray programs, and

village clean up is paying dividends. RAM has, and continues to play a vital role in this rewarding project.

It isn't all good news. The Ministry of Health continues to have issues in obtaining suitable land in Honiara for the erection of staff housing. RAM arranged for the delivery of five kit houses (funded by AusAID) to Honiara at the request of the Ministry of Health. The kits remain in storage in Honiara. Teams of volunteers from many RAWCS Regions have indicated they will assist with the erection of the houses as soon as the land problems can be resolved. It is very likely that the houses will be reallocated to provincial locations if the Honiara situation continues. Frustrating, but not something we can do much about. RAWCS Coordinators will be kept informed.

Update provided by PDG Peter Thomas

Did you know: *Britain's Charles II died of malaria in 1685.*

Reserve the Date.

2011 RAM National Conference

Date: **Weekend 14-15 May 2011**
Place: **St Columban's Catholic Secondary
College
Caboolture, Queensland**

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.

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Contributions and comments are welcome.