

Rotarians Against Malaria

National Manager's Newsletter October 2018

RAM - A volunteer-run organisation working to eliminate malaria

HEADLINE NEWS!!

RAM Awarded \$251,000 Global Grant for Timor Leste: The Rotary Foundation has awarded the Global Grant that had been requested by RAM to provide timely support to the Timor Leste National Malaria Program as they seek to achieve WHO malaria free certification by 2022. The Rotary Club of Hobart Nth D9830 is the International Partner Club and the Rotary Club of Dili Lafaek D9550 is the Host Partner Club for this Grant with supervision and coordination provided by RAM. A total of 15 Australian Rotary Districts supported this application with DDFs and several individual Clubs.

Dr Jenny Kerrison confirmed as RAM's Deputy Manager: At the RAM AGM, held during the annual RAM Conference, Jenny Kerrison was unanimously confirmed as Deputy National Manager. Jenny will become National Manager on 1st July 2019.



'Chasing Malaria' in PNG:

Early indications are that the vector control and community engagement activities of RAM PNG's Chasing Malaria team in the high incidence 'hot spots' in Central Province have reversed the trend with malaria incidence rates now falling.

New project development:

The RAM Committee is currently working on developing new projects in Solomon Islands and Indonesian West Timor as well as considering how malaria elimination in Vanuatu can be supported by Rotary.

RAM Fund raising:

Fundraising results have been strong in the early part of this Rotary year particularly in the Southern Region Districts. Well done to all the keen RAM Chairs and Committees in these Districts!!

RAM PNG

RAM - managing the PNG National Malaria Control Program:

In recognition of the resurgence in malaria cases in PNG due to insufficient resourcing of hospitals, clinics and aid posts across PNG and despite the success of RAM's national bed net distribution program, RAM has, since the start of 2018, been assigned responsibility for supplying all malaria commodities and reviewing malaria treatment performance across the nation. RAM has employed nine Regional Malaria Coordinators (RMCs) and five Provincial

Malaria Supervisors (PMSs) who now visit all accessible health facilities quarterly and supply RDTs, ACTs (drugs) and antenatal bed nets (LLINs). These staff members also audit inventory and distribution records for malaria commodities, monitor testing and patient treatment histories and ensure all cases are accurately reported to the National Health Information System (NHIS). Since the start of the year there have been no more stock-outs or shortages.

RAM PNG program funding is provided by The Global Fund 75%, Against Malaria Foundation 21%, PNG Govt. 3% Rotary 1%. This is a world leading case of Rotary strategic partnerships!!

RAM bed net distribution teams are presently in East Sepik (Ambunti Drekkekier and Wosera Gawi) and South Fly in Western Province. These teams should be finished in two weeks when teams move to Kiunga and Tabubil for distributions in North Fly and Telefomin. The biggest setback has been in South Fly where very bad seas delayed some staff from moving into the areas along the Fly River for over a week. Also one team in Ambunti Drekkekier (May River) could not enter into their area for some days due to Tribal Fights in the area.

Chasing Malaria Project:

Chasing malaria project work is continuing in Central Province and NCD and latest results show that the interventions in the identified malaria hot spots of Waima and Bereina do appear to have decreased incidence rates although the bed net fence described in the last Newsletter has been deemed to have had no positive effects at all. Ongoing surveillance has shown increasing rates of transmission in the Kuriva area so RAM teams have commenced malaria awareness and intervention activities there as well. The current plan is to work with the schools in Kuriva and hopefully train School Health Teachers to test and treat malaria of school pupils within their schools and also start school anti-malaria activities in each school.



RAM in Australia has agreed to supply two shipping container loads of LLINs to continue support for Chasing Malaria.

NIPMA:

Following the World Malaria Congress RAM commenced discussions with representatives of the New Ireland Province Malaria Alliance (NIPMA) regarding RAM participation in NIPMA's proposed definitive feasibility Study (DFS) into a malaria elimination program for the Province. After careful consideration, the RAM Executive Committee decided not to participate in the proposed DFS but to maintain a dialogue with NIPMA and to seek an active involvement in the actual elimination program when that is commenced following the DFS.

RAM Solomon Islands

Speaking at the recent annual RAM Conference Mr Ben Ricki (Director Health Promotions Dept. MoH&MS) reported that the Health Promoting Village model is a key approach that is to be applied in all provinces. The strength of this intervention is in community engagement and ownership of the outcomes. In this model, RAM is an important partner by providing sets of tools to enable villages to reduce the incidence of mosquitoes around the villages.

Also speaking at the RAM Conference Mr Alby Bobogare (Director National Vector Borne Disease Program) described a recent small increase in reported malaria cases in the Solomons which has reversed the continuous down trends recorded since 2003. Albi noted that Malaita (44% of national cases) and Central Islands Provinces carried the highest infection rates and attributed recent increases to some low quality LLINs that had entered the 3 year bed net replacement cycle and the cessation of IRS operations in 2015.

RAM's planning for the proposed collaboration with DFAT and the Solomon Islands MoH&MS to conduct trial malaria elimination programs is on hold pending receipt of the report of a WHO sponsored Malaria Program Review (MPR) completed in Honiara in July. We understand that this report will focus new program development on arresting the recent increased infection rates and strengthening the health service infrastructure in high case load

areas. RAM is keen to further develop our support for the Solomon Islands malaria program and so we could switch back to malaria control in high incidence areas rather than focussing on malaria elimination in low incidence areas.

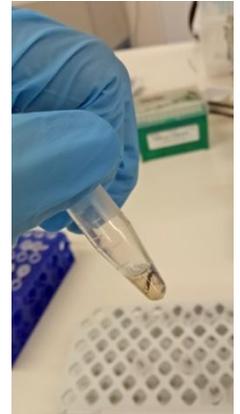
RAM PhD candidate progress.

Edgar's report:

"I am knuckling down with my write up now as we enter this last stage of the PhD journey. I have submitted one of my chapters for review, it was the chapter on maximising the use of the Barrier Screen for mosquito collection. I am currently working my way through my human behaviour chapter (which I presented at the World Malaria Congress) and my mosquito behaviour chapter. As part of my mosquito behaviour chapter, we were able to collect a good number of blood fed mosquitoes off the barrier screens, I am now working in the lab to determine what these mosquitoes were feeding on and to see what proportion are human blood."

The photo shows a bloodfed mosquito about to be lysed.

Edgar and his supervisor Prof Tom Burkot both presented at this year's RAM Conference.



Vanuatu

RAM has been contacted by the incoming WHO Malaria Program Technical Advisor for Vanuatu, Tessa Knox. Both Solomon Islands and Vanuatu have recently conducted thorough reviews of their National Malaria Programs and detailed reports for each nation have been prepared, although RAM is yet to see them. Ahead of the report release Tessa has highlighted the main recommendations for Vanuatu many of which relate to responses to reduced Global Fund contributions. Tessa is interested to see if Rotary can assist with specific programs including pre-elimination surveillance for Torba, Shefa and Penama and maintaining malaria free status for Tafea.

RAM has no budget allocation for Vanuatu, in the current year, but we are interested in assisting RAWCS projects in Vanuatu to include a malaria component and we have contacted RNZWCS to see if they have any plans or capacity to assist. Early in the history of RAM our first program contributions were in support of New Zealand malaria projects in Vanuatu in the early 1990's.

RAM Timor Leste

I am very pleased to report that our Global Grant application to support the elimination of malaria in Timor Leste has been approved by the full board of Trustees of the Rotary Foundation. The grant total is USD \$251,000 and is aimed at providing timely and crucial support to the Timor Leste National Malaria Program (NMP) to achieve WHO malaria free certification by 2022. This initiative would not have been possible without the good will of Australian Rotarians and the support of the following fifteen Districts through contributions of DDFs:- **Districts 9455, 9465, 9500, 9520, 9550, 9630, 9640, 9650, 9670, 9675, 9710, 9800, 9810, 9820, 9830.**

I wish to thank all of these District teams for your support of this work. It will make a great impact to the future of Timor Leste and also to Australia's health security.

The release of funds from the grant was contingent on revising the original MoU between the three coordinating parties, RC Hobart Nth, RC Dili Lafaek and the Timor Leste MoH. This has now been completed and ordering of the LLINs and IRS spraying units is at an advanced stage.

RAM has facilitated discussions between Timor Leste officials (Drs Monteiro and Manel) and Dr Sarlyn Ralo (representing the malaria program in Indonesian west Timor NTT Province) on cross border collaborative programs to achieve malaria free status for the whole island of Timor and surrounding smaller islands. As a result RAM now is planning to support NTT and Indonesian Rotarians to further develop these initiatives.

Malaria Vaccine Development

“By the time you read this the Malaria Vaccine Project will have reached its \$500,000 target to support the critical clinical trials of Professor Michael Good’s promising vaccine in a non-endemic country Australia. This is a marvellous effort in less than 2 years with Rotary doing the heavy lifting having raised nearly \$340,000. I extend a BIG THANK YOU to RAM, RABS, Rotary districts and clubs across Australia and in PNG.

It is indeed a time for great celebration because with this money supporting the research program, the clinical trials have actually begun. As Professor Michael Good said recently, “We have now commenced the first human trials of the 3-dose vaccine, which we have trademarked as PlasProtect®. After receiving the vaccine, these volunteers will be given a live malaria infection to determine whether they are protected.” It would be an understatement to say that we can’t wait to hear the results.

I wish I could say that this \$500,000 will be sufficient to support the cost of the non-endemic (Australian) version of the clinical trials of PlasProtect®. Sadly, this is not the case but we are steadfastly upholding our key goal to fund the non-endemic clinical trials SO THAT the vaccine can be trialled in endemic countries like PNG and Uganda. We have reset our target at \$1,000,000 for a number of reasons. Firstly, it was not possible to find the 3 cohorts of 12 subjects to undertake the trials at the Gold Coast. There will be only 1 cohort of 12 subjects at the Gold Coast and Dr Danielle Stanisic is still seeking further volunteers for that cohort. The remaining 2 cohorts will be found in Brisbane but that will necessitate contracting a special agency Q-Pharm to locate and manage these cohorts. This is extremely expensive but will enable the clinical trials to be finished at both locations by mid-2019. Secondly, Professor Good wishes to do a pilot study of the off-the-shelf (cryo) version of the PlasProtect® to see that it is safe and activates the immune system before it is used in endemic countries. Both of these reasons have necessitated our new \$1 million target.

Accordingly, our goal in this project has not changed—only the money needed to take this vaccine to the 400,000 who die annually from malaria and all those who can be prevented from being afflicted with this terrible disease.



Not to go the extra mile and save the lives of all those young children and pregnant mothers is unthinkable.

Please continue to help us reach this target of \$1,000,000. Thanks to your help we are already HALF-WAY there and we are hoping that governments, corporate bodies and private individuals can be persuaded to carry a much greater share of the burden in this second phase. We need Rotarians to raise another \$250,000 and for various reasons we have to complete this task by December 2019. This is our challenge to you and we know that there is no organization in Australia with a greater humanitarian heart than Rotary.”

PDG Graham Jones, Chair of the Malaria Vaccine Project Committee

[Pictured is Karin Kolenko’s hard working fund raiser Benji.]

RAM and other Rotary malaria programs.

REMaRAG Chair Ian Priestley and Director of Education Gillian Pierce pictured at the RI convention in Toronto convincing Rotarians that eradicating malaria is achievable and worthy of RI’s attention. At next year’s RI Convention in Hamburg RAM Executive Committee members, Virginia Turner, Jenny Kerrison and Bruce Anderson will be on deck to support Ian and his team. The purpose of REMaRAG, as the malaria Rotary Action Group, is not to fundraise or to run projects but to support others within Rotary who are doing this and help with such things as grant applications, contacts and to generally act as a source of information about malaria. In order to help with this they have recruited Rotarians who will be responsible for specific geographical areas:



- Africa: PDG Dele Balogun deleabalogun@gmail.com
- Central and South America: PDG Ellen Blasi. epblasi@yahoo.com
- Australasia: RAM Deputy Manager Jenny Kerrison jennyrekkerrison@bigpond.com
- Rest of World and general queries - PDG Ian Priestley (remaragmalaria@gmail.com)

A link to the latest REMaRAG Newsletter is on the RAM website under the 'Reports and Articles' drop down menu > REMaRAG page, final line.

RMP (Rotarian Malaria Partners) latest Newsletter reports that Rotarian Malaria Partners Zambia (RMPZ) is now a legally registered entity in Zambia and has been invited to a seat at the national malaria control council. For more information about Seattle based RMP and their work in Africa and South America contact them at info@rotarianmaliapartners.org to get on their mail list.

Annual RAM Conference

The 2018 RAM Conference was enjoyed by 70 delegates representing 16 Districts. We were hosted by the Institute for Glycomics which provided first class meeting and presentation facilities, organised great catering and donated gifts for the 15 invited Speakers. Thanks to Dr Dannielle Stanisic (Institute for Glycomics) and Dr Ivor Harris (former Deputy Director of the Army Malaria Institute), 25 delegates had a very informative pre-conference malaria laboratory experience where they tried different techniques for detecting and observing malaria parasites. Representatives of RDT manufacturers Abbott Pharmaceutical, Jody Mitchell and Deb Rehbein and Meridian Bioscience, Morna McRae also assisted and provided briefings on their respective analytical products.

The Conference offered a wide range of malaria related topics with over 15 speakers from research institutes; RAM; and RAM's partner countries in Papua New Guinea (PNG); the Solomon Islands; Timor Leste, and our new partner West Timor in the Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT) Province, Indonesia. Most of the speakers' presentations are available on the RAM Website under 'Galleries' > Media Resources > Guest Speaker Presentations and a full report on the Conference proceedings, written by RAM Deputy Manager Dr Jenny Kerrison, can be read under 'Reports and Articles' > Conference Reports .

Many Rotarians helped with the organisation of the Conference and in hosting our International guests; particular thanks are due to David and Chris Bromwich and Regina Tucker. The Conference program ran smoothly thanks to the assistance of two Rotaractors, Ada Gain and Liam Hughes. The Conference dinner, held at the Southport Sharks AFL Club was a very enjoyable evening where the 80 guests were welcomed by former Premier of Queensland the Hon Rob Borbidge AO, and past National Chair of RAWCS John McLaren. Later the School student's malaria videos were screened and judged and everyone had a chance for some well-earned fellowship and networking after the busy Conference schedule.



RAM Web site and Media

See RAM at www.ram.rawcs.com.au and www.facebook.com/ram.australia/ .

Rotaractor Holstein Wong has now stepped down from the important PR and Media Coordinator role on the RAM Executive Committee and I would like to take this opportunity to thank her for her outstanding contribution to RAM over the past three years. Holstein oversaw the development of the present website and re-invigoration of the Facebook page as well as liaising with RDU Magazine to develop excellent coverage for RAM and made a great contribution to the RAM Committee.

RAM Schools Video Competition 2018

RAM National Secretary Virginia reports that: “The 2018 Video Competition was won by Brighton Primary Year 4 Students (photo below), closely followed by North Balwyn Primary School – both from Victoria and the third prize was received by the Faith Lutheran Primary school, Queensland. Thank you to the students for an excellent performance. The research and preparation of the video was very good and covered the Global problem, the treatment of malaria, the protection of babies and children against the mosquitoes and the treat if affected. These great short presentations can be viewed on the RAM website www.ram.rawcs.com.au . The links appear beneath the Blue [DONATE NOW] box in the right hand side column of most of the site’s pages.



The main purpose of the Malaria Video competition is designed to spread awareness of the global impact of malaria in developing countries particularly amongst the young.”

The future of this competition depends on the involvement of the multiple Districts across Australia but uptake of this opportunity has been very limited. If you would like to see schools in your District get involved please contact Virginia vm.turner@bigpond.com . The competition will only run again if there is genuine wide spread expressions of interest.

RAM Positions vacant

We would very much like to hear from any Rotarians or Rotaractors who would be interested in joining the RAM Executive Committee in the position of National Secretary or PR and Media Coordinator.

For any RAM related enquiries please contact:

Dave Pearson: dave@sugarloafne.com or **Virginia Turner:** vm.turner@bigpond.com

Contacts for the RAM Executive Committee and all RAM District Chairs can be found on the RAM web site under About Us / Contact Us.

RAM is a National Activity of RAWCS



David Pearson :
National Manager RAM, 24th October 2018.

RAM CONFERENCE SNAPS thanks to Ada Gain.



Conference reception and hand-outs.



Bill Oakley's RAM JAMs - \$700 raised for RAM!!



Morna McRae and Ivor Harris in the Conference Lab Sessions organised by Danielle Stanisic.



Prof Tom Burkot delivering a key note address.