

Rotarians Against Malaria (RAM) National Committee Meeting and Conference

Date: Weekend 17 – 18 May 2008.

Location: St Columban's Secondary College, Caboolture, Queensland.

Attendance: Attendance varied over the weekend but peaked at about 80 for the Conference Dinner on the Saturday night. When the Conference opened there were 35 present. With the exception of Western Australia, all States and Territories, plus Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands were represented.

Saturday 17 May

Proceedings opened at 1205 hrs, RAM National Committee Chairman, PDG Bill Dethlefs in the Chair.

Initially PDG Bill asked everyone present to introduce themselves and also acknowledged PDG Peter Thomas' receipt of his *Service Above Self* award.

Apologies. Received and conveyed from RIDE John Lawrence and PDG John Reddish.

Chairman PDG Bill Dethlefs spoke to a circulated paper – *Strategic Planning – Vision Statement*.

He quoted our stated 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.

and went on to explain the rationale behind this objective. He then gave an overview of recent developments in RAM. These included –

- Targets for the reduction of the incidence of malaria in Papua New Guinea and the Solomons – from over 300/1,000 per year to less than 80/1,000
- The great success of the *Adopt A Village* (AAV) program
- The great support of The Rotary Foundation (TRF).
- The improved means of internal communication via the quarterly newsletter.
- The relationship and liaison with other local and major international organisations involved in the fight against malaria.

Rtn Steve Cottingham (RC Mooloolaba) was invited by Chairman Bill to speak on his personal experiences on malaria. Steve spoke of his background, initially as a Patrol Officer (*Kiap*) in Papua New Guinea, 1969-1974, and subsequently working in many other malaria endemic countries. He described in detail experiencing attacks of malaria. Steve stressed that he had survived because he had a strong support structure. He spoke of the aid post network that existed in Papua New Guinea in 1974, but has now gone. He stressed that with support, malaria is survivable but how it's a totally different story in isolated villages and that the children are most affected.

PP Dr Diana Hart distributed update notes on research being conducted by one of last year's speakers, Leia Hee, PhD student at the Bosch Institute, Faculty of Medicine, University of Sydney. Leia's project, supported by ARHRF, is –

Identification of mechanisms that cause the lung complications in severe malaria

Dr Diana Hart reported that Leia has made good progress during the past year. Her findings about the entry of white blood cells into the lung are unique. This is likely to be linked to the formation of lung oedema and Leia will test that idea over the next few months. Reducing white blood cell infiltration through the use of anti-inflammatory drugs is a viable proposition if we find that infiltration to be important in causing oedema.

Leia will soon complete her experiments and write her thesis before the end of 2008. Her findings will be published in scientific journals with one paper presently being written.

PP George McLelland (ADI) advised of a recent article published in the journal of the Royal Australia College of General Practitioners , *GPReview*. The College is supporting a new training program designed to improve primary health care access in rural and remote Papua New Guinea. The article can be read via - <http://www.racgp.org.au/Content/NavigationMenu/Publications/GPReview/2008GPReview/May/200805north.pdf>

Keynote Speaker, Prof Dennis Shanks, Director, Australian Army Malaria Institute, Enoggera, Queensland

Prof Shanks spoke on the work of the Australian Army Malaria Institute (AMI). Amongst the points he made were –

- AMI works collaboratively with a number of other similar institutions including –
 - World Health Organisation
 - University of Queensland
 - Queensland Institute of Medical Research
 - Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, Washington DC
 - Vietnam People's Army institutions in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City
- AMI's main function was to keep soldiers safe from disease in tropical environments.
- Malaria in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) today
- Research work currently being undertaken with the Vietnamese Army.
- A great deal of what AMI does is drug and vaccine evaluation as well as evaluating the use of repellents and nets
- AMI is also working on –
 - Dengue fever
 - Japanese encephalitis
 - Ross River fever

Prof Shanks spoke of the evaluation of rapid diagnosis methods for of dengue fever and spoke of the 342 cases of dengue experienced in East Timor by members of the ADF. In concluding, he stressed that the AMI's main emphasis was the development of anti-malarial drugs as well as the development of viral vaccines for Japanese encephalitis Ross River fever

PP Ron Seddon OL (RC Port Moresby) gave an update on the Papua New Guinea RAM situation.

His address included –

- Price of nets is reducing.
- RAM Papua New Guinea will be accepting the responsibility for administering up to \$US50 million that will be used mainly to purchase ACT drugs.
- A high proportion of the Papua New Guinea population is resistant to current drugs.
- Research has found that only 47 per cent of fevers are malaria. It is therefore essential that all fever cases must be tested prior to drugs, such as the more expensive ACTs, being administered.
- Discussed the net distribution – presently in Bougainville. To date nets have been distributed to 50 of the 89 administrative Districts in Papua New Guinea.
- RAM Papua New Guinea not only looking at nets but also indoor residual insecticide, eg IKON. He did say that they may be resorting to DDT.
- Research is being conducted into giving nets to HIV/AIDS and TB patients.

- Every new mother in Papua New Guinea will be given a free anti-natal net. These nets will be bright pink to prevent re-sale.
- There is an urgent need to expand the present Rotary Club of Port Moresby three (3) person RAM Committee.
- Shortly a Malaria Resource Centre will open in Port Moresby.
- Following a question on the strength of nets, the supplier is going to strengthen the bottom 700 mm of nets with a double layer or netting.

Ron Seddon concluded by stressing that the aim of RAM Papua New Guinea is to reduce morbidity and mortality by 50 per cent over the next five years, with mortality reducing from “high” to “low”.

PDG Richmond Manyweathers spoke on contributions to the RAM AAV program. To date these total \$637,971.69. He thanked the hundreds of Rotary clubs and private individuals who have contributed.

He also spoke of a current DG’s wife who suggested to clubs that rather than giving her gifts or flowers during the “official visit” they contribute to RAM AAV. He suggested others may consider this.

PDG Richmond concluded by taking the group through the process followed on receipt of donations.

PP Michael Morrison (D9800) spoke on World Malaria Day. This followed an item last year when it was agreed this should be considered. PP Michael had agreed to investigate the situation.

Michael reported that WHO had decided that 25 April be designated as World Malaria Day. With a team from D9800 Michael Morrison had come up with a suggested strategy that he then presented. It included the following –

- Idea of World Malaria Week
- Need to take action nationally with a media saturation and involvement of all other interested groups leading to an increased awareness of both malaria and Rotary’s role. Not to be exclusive to RAM but with RAM as the catalyst.
- RI might agree to support..
- Need to involve –
 - WHO
 - NGOs
 - Aid organisations
 - Church groups
 - Expatriates (in Australia) of the countries in which we work.
- Discussed possible organisational structure from the State level down to clubs and offered suggested roles for various coordinators and teams.
- Discussed possible event ideas
- Discussed possible sponsors, eg drug companies, insecticide manufacturers.

In the discussion that followed 25 April was basically rejected. The concept of a National Malaria Day was agreed but not on ANZAC Day. There was a great deal of discussion with many suggesting that the casualties caused by malaria, especially in the island campaigns of World War II, could be linked with the ANZAC ethos. Chairman PDG Bill suggested delegates think about the issue and it was agreed that discussion would resume on Sunday morning.

PDG Lou Johnson, Chairman RAWCS spoke on Prescribed Private Funds (PPFs). A PPF is a legal structure which is often used by families, individuals or companies to establish grant-making foundations. A PPF must only make grants and is not permitted to carry out charitable programs.

Prescribed Private Funds (PPF) are a relatively new category of private foundation - the first PPFs were approved in June 2001.

PPFs cannot make grants to ancillary funds, other PPFs or political parties. The sole purpose of a PPF must be the giving away of funds to other deductible gift recipients; it cannot carry out other activities

PDG Lou Johnson suggested that RAWCS should offer the RAWCS Overseas Aid Fund as a possible recipient for PPF grants.

PDG Peter Thomas, Solomons Island Liaison spoke to a circulated paper updating everyone on the Solomon Islands situation. The undoubted highlight of PDG Peter's presentation was his advice of the dramatic attitudinal change that has occurred at AusAID. In recent months there has been a major change in its attitude towards both Rotary and RAM. Because of the significance of much of what PDG Peter said, his paper is attached.

It is worth stressing that because of the impending infrastructural work required as a result of the massive support from the Australian Government, together with the expected Global Fund grant, large numbers of volunteers for a wide range of projects will be required. PDG Peter is anxious to develop a data base of suitable volunteers, and their skills, as quickly as possible. There is a great deal of construction work required but other skills are required as well. PDG Peter also spoke of the need for clubs to seek out suitable apprentices to travel with teams.

Very simply, the aim is the elimination of malaria from the Solomon Islands.

Rotary Dinner – Speaker, Prof Dennis Shanks, Director, AMI

Detailed notes weren't taken. Prof Shanks gave an extremely interesting address on the history of malaria research in Australia and Melanesia. He spoke of the nature of research conducted during World War II. This became critical because of the extremely high casualties caused by malaria.

Of special interest to those present was his explanation of experiments that are to be conducted in the northern part of Vanuatu with a view to eliminating malaria.

At the conclusion of his talk Prof Shanks was thanked by PDG Ian Sayers. PDG Ian also thanked the Rotary Club of Calboolture for its efforts in hosting the dinner, as well as those Rotarians and friends attending, some of whom had travel led great distances. Supported by acclamation.

Sunday 18 May.

PDG Ian Sayers, Deputy Chair, RAM National Committee presented for discussion and consideration a *Draft Rotarians Against Malaria Procedures Document*. The need for such a document had been discussed last year. A draft had been prepared and considered by the National RAM Executive and was now presented to the wider audience of RAM Rotarians. The document was considered in detail. A number of alterations/amendments were suggested. Once these have been made the resultant document will be circulated and a copy given the RAWCS.

It was resolved that the document, and the changes resulting from the morning's discussions, be accepted. Moved PDG John McLaren. Seconded PDG Charles Guesdon. Carried

PDG John McLaren, Timor L'este Liaison, reported on the present situation in Timor L'este. PDG John reported that currently the Rotary Club of Dili has about seven active members and that they, together with the RAWCS Liaison Officer, look after everything to do with Rotary in Timor L'este. He explained there is a need for RAM, although there is a problem getting someone to perform the RAM function. He also advised that the Government of Timor L'este needs consistency in the approach to developments and projects conducted by organisations like Rotary. There is a need for much more to be done, but Rotary is severely under resourced there.

PDG John made a strong plea. Rotary clubs that are doing anything in Timor L'este must let RAM/RAWCS and/or District 9550 know what they're doing.

Chairman PDG Bill Dethlefs sought and received feedback on the Newsletter. Very positive comment was received. PDG Bill advised the next issue is imminent.

PP Michael Morrison, D 9800 led a resumption of discussion on the World Malaria Day concept. The general consensus was that there be a Malaria Day/Week but that it is not to be on the present day – 25 April. ANZAC Day is sacrosanct and must be avoided. It was also felt a week might be ambitious. In the context of communication on the concept, Steve Cottingham reminded everyone of the importance of the internet and “blogs”.

Have Your Say session to conclude proceedings followed. *Dot point* notes on points/issues raised follow –

- Malaria awareness – would be worthwhile checking with RSL Sub-branches on possibility of speaking with members – might lead to financial support.
- A recent Central African GSE Team consisting of five doctors resulted in great PR for RAM.
- Need for updated and topical point-of-sale material on RAM.
- PDG Lou Johnson on RAWCS –
 - Great advances have been made
 - RAWCS back “under control”
 - Website – problems – being addressed.
 - Establishment of a Permanent Trust – principal not touched, RAWCS gets interest.
 - PPFs -a major fund raising opportunity.
- PDG Peter Thomas – reminded everyone he needs names of people and their skills for data base for work in the Solomons.
- PP Ron Seddon will pass on *Roll Back Malaria* material. Also spoke of the supply of treated nets at Port Moresby airport.
- Australians need to be told about malaria. The anopheles mosquito is down the east coast – awareness must be raised.
- DGN Walter Buchanan suggested that the lack of knowledge about malaria could be addressed by illustrating the problem of Ross River fever.
- Pull up banners, with artwork along the lines of the front of the present brochure and “hang up” banner, are being investigated at present. Hoped that we might be able to purchase in quantity, thereby reducing unit cost.

Chairman PDG Bill Dethlefs wrapped up the conference by briefly summarising the program and what had occurred over the previous two days. The efforts and hospitality of the Rotary Club of Caboolture were acknowledged and supported by acclamation.

It was agreed that next year's conference will be held at the same location – if possible – on weekend 30/31 May 2008.

PDG Richmond Manyweathers thanked PDG Bill Dethlefs for his efforts and this too was supported by acclamation.

Conference ended at 1210 hrs.