



RAM NEWSLETTER

Volume 2 Number 2

My Rotary Friends and Friends of Rotary.

Doesn't time go quickly when you're having fun! Christmas is just around the and and 2010 is fast coming to an end.

As you will see in another section of this Newsletter, we have set the date for the 2011 Conference and meeting at Caboolture. Please put the date in your diaries now.

I continue to be heartened by the continuing support by Rotary clubs for the *Adopt A Village* program. I'm sure it's been said hundreds of times, but I'll say it again – we know that sleeping under Long Lasting Insecticide Treated Nets works. If ever you want evidence of that go to the Rotary Club of Port Moresby's Rotarians Against Malaria website and read about what happened in Kikori Province. Please keep up that wonderful support.

Something else that I find heartening, and also very exciting, are increasing numbers of reports in the literature on research being conducted into alleviating, or addressing, the ravages of malaria. Some of you would have read an article in the *Scientific American* (Nov 2010) that was recently circulated by one of our number on work towards our Holy Grail – a vaccine. I have included an item in this Newsletter about research being conducted here at the Australian National University on another aspect of anti-malaria drugs.

Some very good news regarding the extension of the Adopt A Village program to Timor L'este. Thanks to the efforts of a couple of people, Daryl Mills, the RAWCS representative in Timor L'este, and PDG Phil Dempster, District 9550 and RAM Deputy Chair, who have travelled to Timor L'este a number of times on this subject, we're starting to get somewhere. We've received some positive information from the Timor L'este Ministry of Health and are pursuing this at present. You will be kept informed of progress.

It's also time to start thinking about the next Malaria Awareness Day – 30 April 2011.

As this will be the last Newsletter for 2010, may I wish you all - you and your families - a very Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy, safe and successful 2011.

Ian Sayers
Chairman

Book Review – *Fever* by Sonia Shah

This review is based on one published in *The Canberra Times, Panorama*, 31 Jul 2010. Ian Sayers owns the book and what follows is a combination of his, and *The Canberra Times'* reviewer's thinking. This book, published by Allen & Unwin, subtitled, *How Malaria has Ruled Humankind for 500,000 Years*, is a very interesting read. It tells us much of what we, as dedicated Rotarians Against Malaria already know, but adds much more.

The historical aspects of malaria over the centuries are very interesting as is her coverage, albeit fairly briefly, but nevertheless succinctly of the problems during the World Wars. Shah reminds us that every single soldier in the US Americal Division sent to Guadalcanal in 1942 came down with malaria, some more than once. As she says, "overall malaria sickened 60 per cent of Allied troops in Southeast Asia". We also learn from her of the author, Theodor Seuss Geisel, aka Dr Suess, using his talents to educate the troops on anti-malarial measure. Anyone interested in pursuing what Dr Suess wrote can go to - http://www.sel.barc.usda.gov/diptera/ann_text.html.

For those who want to learn more about this disease we work with, *Fever* is worth looking for in your library.

Australian War Memorial Malaria Exhibition

The refurbished World War 2 Galleries at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra contain a small exhibition on malaria and its impact in the Island campaigns of World War 2. In June 1943, there were 25,000 Australian servicemen with malaria. General Blamey ordered Colonel Neil Fairley to set up the Allied Land Headquarters Medical Research Unit at Cairns. Very soon after a special research team began trials at the Unit.

The exhibition consists of a dozen or so paintings and drawings, many by the first female official war artist, Nora Heysen.

It's an interesting, although very small, exhibition and if you happen to be at the Australian War Memorial check it out in the World War 2 Galleries.

Pakistan Floods and Global Fund Action

Over recent months many of us have been asked about the situation in Pakistan following the disastrous floods there in July and what the malaria situation is. A recent edition of the *Global Fund Observer* (Issue 134, 23 Nov 10) contained the following news item.

In the aftermath of the massive flooding that hit Pakistan in July 2010, the Global Fund and its partner organisations took a series of steps to ensure continuity of prevention and treatment services for its malaria and tuberculosis grants. These steps included the following:

- Merlin UK, an international NGO, expedited the supply of artemisinin combination therapies (ACTs) and rapid diagnostic malaria test kits (RDTs). The Global Fund Secretariat approved a request to re-programme a grant (using grant savings) to facilitate this.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) organized an emergency shipment of ACTs and RDTs from Afghanistan to cover needs in two of the most affected provinces.
- The Global Fund Secretariat arranged for an emergency supply of long-lasting insecticide-treated bed nets (LLINs).
- The Secretariat approved the use of a new strategy (within the parameters of an existing grant) to conduct community-based tuberculosis community-based outreach events in the internally displaced person (IDP) camps of the affected districts. The events involve Mercy Corps, the principal recipient, delivering messages on health and hygiene, and providing essential supplies of dry food items.
- With support from the WHO, the National Tuberculosis Control Programme of Pakistan established a number of health posts at IDP camps to provide ongoing tuberculosis care and support services to assist Global Fund-financed programmes. A core element of the work in these camps is the tracking of patients in affected areas to ensure continuation of anti-tuberculosis treatment.

Malaria researcher wins major science

The following article was included in ANU News on 25 August last.

An ANU researcher has won her second major award in as many weeks with the announcement of the L'Oréal Australia for Women in Science Fellowships for 2010. Dr Rowena Martin, NH&MRC Australian Biomedical Fellow and Principal Investigator at the Research School of Biology at ANU and the University of Melbourne received the \$20,000 Fellowship at an awards ceremony in Melbourne. Dr Martin's research looks at drug resistance in the malaria parasite.



The emergence of malaria parasites that are resistant to cheap antimalarial drugs, like chloroquine, has been a disaster for world health. Dr Martin's work shows how this resistance can be caused by small changes in a parasite protein and how this mechanism can be overcome.

Dr Martin said that it was an honour to win one of the fellowships and the \$20,000 in prize money will go a long way towards funding further research into the disease. "Receiving the L'Oréal Fellowship is a great honour. The money will help me develop my career as an independent researcher and build my research team," she said.

"Malaria places immense economic burdens on affected countries. It isn't just associated with poverty; it is a cause of poverty. We will be using new tools such as "metabolomics" to investigate the normal function of the chloroquine-fighting protein and how to inhibit it."

ANU Vice-Chancellor Professor Ian Chubb congratulated Dr Martin on her fellowship describing her research as ground-breaking. "This award recognises the excellent contribution that Dr Martin has made in the field of malaria treatment," Professor Chubb said.

"Her research will make a lasting difference to the lives of the many millions of people living in some of the poorest places on the planet."

The L'Oréal Australia for Women in Science Fellowships awards \$20,000 Fellowships for early-career women scientists to consolidate their careers and rise to leadership positions in science. The Fellowships are awarded to women who have shown scientific excellence in their career to date.

Early this month Dr Martin's research was awarded the inaugural Macquarie University [Eureka Prize for Early Career Research](#).

SOLOMON ISLANDS UPDATE

PDG Peter Thomas represents Rotarians Against Malaria (RAM) on the Pacific Island Regional Multi-Country Coordinating Mechanism (PIRMCCM). PIRMCCM is part of the Global Fund's structure, and provides regional ownership and participatory decision-making in the HIV/Aids, TB, and Malaria programs in the Pacific. RAM, through PDG Peter, has been an invited member (as a developing partner) of PIRMCCM for a number of years, and PDG Peter has been a member of the Executive Committee since October 2009.

Recently he attended a meeting of the PIRMCCM Executive Committee in Fiji and during the meeting assisted the Solomon Islands Director of Malaria Services, Albino Bobogare; to present a detailed progress report on malaria control activities in SI and Vanuatu. A précis of that report follows –

- 360000 LLNs were received in Honiara in January and February 2010
- All of these nets have been distributed to Provincial and regional centres, stored in the warehouses constructed by Rotary volunteers under the RAM program. Without these warehouses the distribution program would have bogged down.
- More than 200000 of these nets have already been distributed to householders.
- Extensive household spraying (IRS – Indoor Residual Spraying) has taken place using the latest long-life insecticide. This tends to be in "hot-spots" where surveys have indicated higher than normal malaria incidence.
- Education programs have been undertaken in many schools and community groups. Rotary has sponsored radio and TV education material (3H project in Honiara)
- Community awareness committees have been introduced in many Provinces and tools provided by Rotary to allow clean-up activities.
- Treatment using ACT has been widely used with great success.
- Surveillance and reporting has been improved greatly. Various reports required by the Global Fund and others have been submitted on time with much improved accuracy.
- The infrastructure program is progressing well with the exception of the staff housing in Honiara where land problems have stopped work. Hopefully this will be resolved soon with the help of Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health Dr Lester Ross.
- RAM has been involved with a boat builder in Queensland to design and manufacture a 5.9m aluminium vessel specifically suitable for Pacific conditions. Boats and motors should be in place in the New Year
- Staff recruitment and training programs have resulted in a much-improved performance at Headquarter and Provincial levels.
- The introduction of the Malaria Steering Committee allowing all stake-holders to participate in planning and implementation processes has greatly improved the effectiveness of the control program and the elimination project in Temotu and Isabel Provinces. PDG Wayne Morris represents RAM on this committee

- The program in Vanuatu is working well, with some minor and different problems. Staffing difficulties have caused some concern. Joint Country meetings have been held to provide a unified approach and assist each other wherever possible.
- Collection of information for the smooth preparation of the Malaria Rolling Continuous Channel Round 2 funding request is underway. (Editor's comment: This is a Global Fund term for the method of funding. In reality it means the Global Fund is very happy with the administration of its Grants in the Solomons) It is anticipated that the request will be ready by due date.

Reserve the Date.

2011 RAM National Conference

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

If you think you're too small to make a difference, try sleeping in a room with an active mosquito.

Thanks to RI President Ray Klinginsmith and Cowboy Logic

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.