

Rotarians Against Malaria (RAM) National Conference

Proceedings

Date: Saturday May 30 – Sunday 31, 2009

Venue: St Columban's Catholic Secondary College, Caboolture, Queensland.

Host: The Rotary Club of Caboolture organised the venue, catering and the conference dinner.

Attendance: 27 Rotarians participated in the conference proceedings and ±52 attended the conference dinner on Saturday night.

PROCEEDINGS

Saturday May 30.

11:50 Morning session opened

The conference was opened by the conference chairman and National Committee Chairman, PDG Bill Dethlefs. Bill advised that he had appointed Tim Richards as Conference Secretary.

Chairman's Introduction: Delegates were asked to briefly introduce themselves and the conference program was outlined.

Chairman PDG Bill Dethlefs explained RAM progress since last year's conference.

Significant progress included

- Circulation of the RAM Quarterly Newsletter was up from 115 to 180 and is now being placed on district web sites.
- The new RAM website.
- The inaugural Australian Malaria Awareness Day (MAD) as part of the World Malaria Day was considered a success. World Malaria Day fell on April 25th unfortunately clashing with Anzac Day and consequently MAD Australia was moved to April 30. The primary objectives of MAD are to make Rotarians and others more aware of the ongoing tragedy caused by malaria, and to influence membership development.
- Adopt A Village raises over Au \$100,000/year.

Proceedings:

RAM Website: A review of the RAM Website was made with the following conclusions:

Adopt A Village page – no changes recommended

Reports page – upload older reports

Newsletters page – Currently dates back to 2007.

In discussion it was decided to place as much information as possible on the website including PowerPoint presentations, reports and posting of relevant photographs such as Adopt A Village related and MAD activities. These can then be available to interested groups for use in campaigns and media releases. Some high resolution photographs will also be made available to allow their use in quality print reproduction. Ian Yarker (D9640 Gold Coast) offered to have his email address placed on the web site so that he can be contacted directly for additional high resolution photos.

Contributions page - The creation of this new page was agreed to. Clicking here will quickly and clearly give readers the information required to make tax deductible contributions to RAM.

Malaria Awareness Day (MAD): The chairman acknowledged the amount of work Rotarians put into making this day a success. A particular mention was made of

- PDG Ian Sayers research for answers to possible questions by the press,
- Laurence O’Keeffe for making a large number of spots available on WIN TV,
- RAM for a whole range of successful activities that will be listed in the Chairman’s Newsletter.

A 30 second television Community Service Announcement for MAD was shown.

An important conclusion is that the Rotary clubs that had the most successful campaigns were the ones with the most manpower involved. The Chairman noted that to improve on this year’s success more people would be needed “on the ground”.

13:00 Morning session Closed.

13:45 Post Lunch session Opened.

The session was opened with a brief statement that the future directions of RAM need to be discussed and a statement created. The Global Fund’s involvement in Timor-Leste, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and PNG will change the way RAM operates. For instance Timor-Leste has a grant of US \$9.6 million, administered by PWC-Indonesia (no Rotary involvement).

Solomon Island Report, by PDG Peter Thomas.

Important points from Peter's presentation are as follows:

Two major RAM activities in the Solomon Islands:

1. The implementation and coordination of the 3H grant project
2. The ongoing management for the provision of infrastructure for the Malaria Elimination Program.

The progress achieved during the past year is pleasing.

Adopt A Village: Recently Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands have been joined in a new program funded and operated by the Global Fund (a fund established to fight HIV-aids, malaria and tuberculosis). RAM has been informed that it will no longer be required to supply bed nets. RAM bed net orders for the Solomon Islands have consequently been cancelled. Regrettably there appear to be a number of obstacles in the start up of this new bed net supply program.

As a consequence of this initiative by the Global Fund the 3H budget has to be rewritten and the changes agreed to by the sponsoring Rotary Clubs and Rotary Foundation. The change in emphasis towards community education about malaria through the education system, church based groups and community organisations.

A review of the Adopt A Village program is therefore required. As an example of how the program can be modified a Senior Malaria Officer with the Guadalcanal Province has suggested the concept of cleaning up a village; draining unwanted water, controlling pig movements and other initiatives to lessen mosquito breeding.

The Ministry of Health has designed a single page, double sided airplane seat pocket insert giving succinct malaria information. This is to be placed on all flights throughout the Solomon Islands. Rotarian Peter Wilson produced the laminated cards at very low cost and RAM freighted them to Honiara free of charge.

Steel shed and house construction: Four steel sheds (12m X 6m), built in kit form in Toowoomba, have been erected in each of four provinces within timeframe and budget. These will be used as bed net storage for the Malaria Elimination Initiative. Kits for an additional four sheds have been delivered to Honiara.

The first steel house was built in Honiara. This was a prototype and was built in Honiara to be near engineering and hardware facilities. Three similar houses will be erected at Lata during the second half of this year. These houses are funded by the Malaria Initiative Program (funded by AusAID) and will cost about one quarter of an equivalent standard house built in Honiara.

RAM has a good working relationship with AusAID, the Ministry of Health, VBDCP, the Rotary Club of Honiara, DG Wayne Morris and his staff at Morris and Sojnocki (trust account managers).

Papua New Guinea Report, by Rio Fiocco

Ron Seddon apologises for being unable to join the conference.

Malaria Resource Testing Centre: RAM has converted an old house in Port Moresby for rapid screening for malaria. If this is a success then others are planned to be built.

The Global Fund has granted the National Department of Health US \$150million over 5 years, US \$50million of which is allocated for the supply of bed nets. RAM will be responsible for net procurement and distribution. After 6 months of negotiation with the Global Fund the grant should be approved next month. The aim is to achieve total bed net coverage during the next 2 years and use year 3 to evaluate the program. Year 4 and 5 will see a second national net distribution with the ultimate aim being the provision of 2 nets per family.

PermaNet has won the tender to supply the nets at a cost of US \$4.00/net including shipping. Net distribution, primarily through church groups but also large companies, will cost an additional US \$1.00/net. RAM will complete surveys to ensure that acceptable net distribution is achieved.

An American group, PSI will survey the concept of social marketing of ACT malaria treatment drugs. The Global Fund will approve a program if the survey is positive.

Some questions were asked:

Are nets being used rather than sold? The Global Fund insists on free distribution (although previously they supported social marketing), which helps prevent on selling.

Does RAM have a good supply of nets? Yes, in country stored in containers.

How are you getting the nets so cheap? US \$47million buying power.

Adopt A Village - Comment, by Ian Sayers

Rotary International is now looking more holistically at aid programs. Ian Sayers has been asked to find ways to promote literacy, health and sanitation. The Global Fund has been set up to fight HIV-aids, tuberculosis, and malaria. They will be supplying bed netting in the future and RAM will need to change its campaign away from solely bed net provision, to a broader program in the future. The new message will be a more holistic approach to Adopt A Village, that is; literacy, health and sanitation.

A discussion ensued on whether the name *Adopt A Village* needed to be changed to reflect this new approach however it was decided to maintain the name and a future direction statement will be released to explain this. See page 5 below for further comment.

Break

16:00 Final Session for Saturday

Adopt A Village – acknowledgement of villages adopted:

Richmond Manyweathers commented that clubs that have adopted a village frequently lose the information about which village they have adopted. Mostly this information is already on the RAM website.

Video – Catalyst Program

A video was shown of a recently aired program from ABC TV's *Catalyst* documenting the discovery of a 5th malaria strain to infect humans. Until recently only 4 strains were known to infect humans (*P. falciparum*, *P. malariae*, *P. vivax* and *P. ovale*) the 5th, *P. Knowlesi*, is a strain that historically infects monkeys and is now frequently infecting people in northern Borneo who are in near-contact with the monkeys. It is virulent, probably more dangerous than *falciparum*.

Draft of a future direction statement, Ian Sayers

Ian has taken on the lead role drafting a statement on the future direction of Adopt A Village. As no new nets will be required from RAM in the Solomon Islands because the Global Fund has taken over this responsibility. Nets will continue to be provided in PNG however. A new statement clarifying this change is needed to avoid any donor confusion. The final statement will be endorsed by Bill Dethlefs, Peter Thomas, Richmond Manyweathers, Ian Sayers, Wayne Morris, and Rio Fiocco/Ron Seddon before release.

In more general discussion Peter Thomas was asked the role of the C.C.C.M. The Community Consultative Committee Meeting is organised by the South Pacific Commission and meets in Nadi, Fiji. Representatives include RAM, NGOs and end users. Its function is to review aid work. Participating countries include the Solomon Islands, but not yet PNG (although PNG sent an observer to the last meeting). This group meets to assess the effectiveness of aid ventures in member countries.

16:30 Close of Day 1 proceedings

Conference Dinner

Some short speeches and acknowledgements were made to commence the dinner. The highlight was a presentation by Dr Katherine Trenholme, Senior Research Fellow, Malaria Biology Laboratory, Queensland Institute of Medical Research.

In her talk, Katherine first summarised the history of evolution of malaria in humans, the most important point being that the malaria parasite has been in existence for around 150 million years and has been with us since the beginning of our evolution away from other primates. It then travelled with humans as they migrated out of Africa.

Her current work involves isolating enzymes in *falciparum* that enable their feeding on red blood cells. Once isolated these enzymes are attacked with various chemicals to test which ones will inhibit them, causing the parasite to starve.

Katherine and her team have isolated three enzymes and validated many drugs that can target these. Their work was commenced four years ago and she estimates a further 15 years (minimum) work will be required before a drug could be released. She stressed that success will be in a treatment not a vaccine.

Peter Thomas thanked Katherine for her presentation.

The conference dinner was a great success. The Rotary Club of Caboolture, with Rosemary Worthington as coordinator, was acknowledged once again this year for their staging of both the conference and dinner.

Sunday, May 31.

09:05 Morning Session Opened

Article on affordable malaria medicine - Diana Hart

Diana alerted the meeting to a program sponsored by Roll Back Malaria and the Gates Foundation to subsidise malaria drugs in some sub-Saharan countries as a trial. The scheme dramatically reduces the cost of the drugs to the end user. The article will be included in the August Newsletter.

Concluding Discussion on Malaria Awareness Day:

Comment: The success of Rotary Club of Morwell in their MAD activities shows the positive results of having many people involved in the preparation and the day's programs.

Initiatives include:

- It is proposed to put RAM on the agenda at the next District Governors' Conference.
- Tap into schools that have existing affiliations with PNG villages or schools.
- Given that MAD follows on from Anzac day, publish stories on malaria and warfare.
- Promote malaria awareness to walkers on the Kakoda Track.
- Getting the attention of other Rotarians because of the number of programs "on the go".
- Money is required for promotional material. Approaching drug companies is one option. Richmond Manyweathers moved that it is reconfirmed that a percentage of proceeds can be cycled back into promotion – up to 15% is the guideline. Peter Thomas seconded and the meeting agreed.
- The idea of introducing BPay and credit card facilities was discussed and it was agreed that this was the way forward to increasing donations in particular the small-dollar donations.
- An increase in donation volume will put additional pressure on the Rotary National Treasurer, Garry Gunnell. There is a need to explore ways to take part of the work load away from him.

11:00 End of first Session

Final Session

Discussion on the new Brochure: A number of changes were recommended and agreed to. These will be made when the current print is finished.

Timor-Leste: A statement needs to be made about the position of RAM in Timor-Leste. Many people specifically wish to donate to Timor yet RAM has no operating mechanism for distribution. Timor is also the recipient of major Global Fund funding.

Forward Statement on RAM aid: This will address the evolution from simply the supply of bed netting to a more holistic approach to improving village living standards. This statement will not be ready before late July but will be released in the August newsletter.

Newsletter: the next Newsletter will be out by week's end;

Next Conference: Tentatively set for May 15th and 16th, 2010. It is not clear at this stage whether St Columban's College will be available at this stage.

Rosemary Worthington and her team were formally congratulated on the excellent preparations and management of this year's conference

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