



D9670 RAM Jottings #2.

This is Edition #2 of an occasional series of RAM info gleaned from various sources.

RAM Australia's web site is at <http://www.ramaustralia.org> .

See also:

http://www.rawcs.com.au/RAWCSPrograms_ram1.htm, for RAM information relating to RAM in Australia and our near neighbours.

RAM PNG's web site is: www.RAM.com.pg

PDG Richmond Manyweathers has provided me with two sample nets and a hundred or so fliers - the blue pamphlets with front covers as the image above. At the national RAM Conference held in Brisbane last month, money was set aside to refresh these brochures.

I now have two copies of a DVD prepared in PNG to describe and support activities in our nearest neighbour. With the help of UNICEF, the World Health Organisation, the PNG Department of Health and, of course, Rotary, an educational colouring book has been distributed within PNG schools. RAM is part of a multi-pronged project called "Roll back Malaria". The booklet is just one of many resources. Medical advances have caught up with some of the book's contents, so it is due for updating and reprinting.

The Adopt-a-Village program is functioning well in PNG and is close to being initiated in Timor Leste. Details of this exciting development will have to wait for another day - suffice to say that RAM, which operates as part of RAWCS Australia, is well on the way to raising the money which will enable a substantial start in this impoverished nation. Clubs which are willing to support this are encouraged to send their cheque to PDG Richmond Manyweathers, preferably via the local D9670 RAM Committee.

The Global Fund of the United Nations has, for several years, annually provided up to two million dollars for bed nets in PNG. Distribution and record keeping are not funded, and this is where Rotary's assistance has been very productive. Unfortunately, the Global Fund will cease operating in PNG in a year or two, after which the program will rely on government funding and donations. Ron Sedden, the very busy PNG RAM coordinator, has expressed concern that, if the project is wound back, Malaria may re-emerge with renewed vigour and infect populations of children and young adults which have grown up with very low exposure.

At the National Conference, very promising details of an experimental vaccine were discussed by representatives of an Australian research institution. Vaccination is, of course, the holy grail of malaria researchers, because it offers prospects of preventing the disease in whole communities through a coordinated program. In short, progress has been made towards inoculation, but commercial availability is probably 5 years away.

Another approach, using drug therapy to prevent infection, is being trialled by the Australian Army in the Solomon Islands. The drugs must be taken before exposure to malaria-carrying mosquitos and repeat doses must be taken regularly. It was reported that amongst 2000 people, not one who took the drugs as and when directed was affected. The drug being tested actually clears the liver of the parasites. This is excellent news for travellers, but is of less value as a lifetime treatment. For this reason, both the drug and the immunisation paths must be developed, at least until the immunisation pathway is proven and available.

Interested Rotarians may recall that microscopists' houses have been constructed in PNG and the Solomons during the past decade and microscopists have been trained and resourced to examine blood samples for the presence of the malaria parasite. There has been good news on that front also, with a much more accurate and far easier diagnostic kit becoming available at a cost per test of less than one Australian dollar.

Remember:

“There is no money in malaria - Only poor people get it.”

I would be delighted to speak at your club. I live in Singleton, but I'll jump at any chance to visit clubs other than my own. Suggest a date and I'll try my best.

John Bennetts

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RAM is an ongoing project of RAWCS