

Guest Speaker: Cherilyn Fleming –
Rotarians Against Malaria

Cherilyn joined the Rotary Club of Adelaide South (now Adelaide Central) in 1992. She then moved to the RC of Blackwood where she was President in 2009/10. Having retired and moved to Goolwa she is now a member of the RC Encounter Bay.

Cherilyn's work has involved the development and implementation of education and training programs for adults who are disadvantaged across many sectors including those with multiple disabilities and challenging behaviours. Cherilyn has just taken on the Rotary District 9510 Rotarians Against Malaria role as Regional Supervisor and presented about the work of RAM

RAM is a volunteer-run organisation working to eliminate malaria and is a project of the 21 Rotary Districts under Rotary Australia World Community Service (RAWCS).

RAM was initiated in 1992 and has partnered with many other organisations including, WHO, Australian Universities Research Teams, Australian Army Research Institute, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and UN Global Fund.

In 2019 there were 100 countries affected by malaria. RAM's focus is in the Western Pacific including PNG, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste and more recently Vanuatu and West Timor. Malaria is a major cause of world poverty as well as chronic illness and death.

Malaria is caused by a parasite spread by the female Anopheles Mosquito with the human body playing host to part of the lifecycle. The parasite first infects the liver then invades the blood stream. Symptoms appear in 12 days of being bitten by an infected mosquito and is fatal if not then treated within 3 days. Even after treatment it can recur weeks or even years later.

The annual global infection rate of malaria is 228 million cases (2019) with 3 billion humans at risk. 67% of deaths are children under the age of 5.

The search for an effective vaccine continues. The Mosquirix (trade name) vaccine developed by Glaxo-SmithKline and trialed in Africa has had limited success as it requires 4 doses, is short lived and only 30% - 40% effective. It also has to be administered in conjunction with the use of bed nets treated with mosquito repellent. In many countries the logistics of effective widespread vaccine administration are very difficult.

RAM programs are taking a grass roots approach to break the cycle of infection from mosquitos:

- Collaboration with other NGOs and Governments
- Treated bed nets
- Residual Insecticidal spraying (RS)
- Education
- Engineered environments to reduce mosquito larvae breeding grounds
- Rapid accurate diagnosis
- Effective treatment (logistics)
- Research PhD scholarships, vaccines?

Current RAM visions include:

- Strategic provision of nets
- Provide more educational resources eg. flip charts
- Provide more Rapid Diagnostic Kits
- Expand RAM's Healthy Villages program
- Sponsor a second PhD candidate
- Provide more volunteer teams
- Convince Rotary International that malaria should be tackled next after polio is eradicated

By visiting clubs and sending out updates Cherilyn hopes to raise donations from clubs and members in support of the programs.

