

SAMHS INFO BULLETIN



Compiled by Corporate Communication

MALARIA

We are currently in the malaria season in Southern Africa. Malaria is of particular concern in returning travellers who visited high risk areas and who present with fever or flu-like illness. High risk areas include certain lowveld areas of Mpumalanga and Limpopo, northern KwaZulu-Natal, and most importantly Mozambique, parts of Zimbabwe and other tropical African countries.

People who develop a fever or body aches with headache are encouraged to visit their local clinic or hospital. Malaria can cause severe death and must be treated urgently. Healthcare workers have been urged to look out for possible cases. Travellers should always protect themselves from mosquito bites by using insect repellents, insecticide-treated bed-nets and wearing of light coloured clothing. In addition, preventative medication is compulsory when visiting high risk areas. Pregnant women and young children should avoid high risk areas where possible.

During December 2011, six patients in Gauteng, without a recent travel history, were diagnosed with malaria. The cases are from two separate areas in the Tshwane District: 3 patients from Soshanguve (north of Pretoria) and 3 patients from a private housing estate in Pretorius Park (Pretoria East). A team from the Department of Health and National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD), a division of the National Health Laboratory Service, investigated these incidents.

Despite a thorough search, they did not find the Plasmodium Falciparum mosquito that has the potential to spread malaria, and found no evidence that malaria could be spreading locally. The investigations revealed that infected mosquitoes had most likely travelled from areas where malaria is common in cars, buses, containers, suitcases or by other means. These types of cases are rare. Mosquitoes that are transported from malaria areas only live for a short period of time, and the types of mosquitoes that are common to Gauteng Province do not have ability to spread malaria.

Approved by: D Med (SAMHS)