WORLD MALARIA DAY: ‘END MALARIA FOR GOOD’

25 April 2016

THE THEME FOR this year’s World Malaria Day – held on 25 April 2016 – is ‘End Malaria For Good’. A core objective of this international day is to create a forum through which representatives from countries worldwide can share the progress they have made and challenges they have faced in the fight against malaria. Having successfully achieved Millennium Development Goal 6c to ‘have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases’, the aim now is to make progress under the Sustainable Development Goals (2015-30).

Despite notable accomplishments in recent years, innovative strategies to prevent, treat and eliminate malaria are still required if we are to halt the resurgence of the disease. In 2015, 88 per cent of malaria cases were found in the World Health Organization (WHO) African Region, 10 per cent in the WHO South-East Asia Region and 2 per cent in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region. As there are shortages in funding, especially in endemic areas, World Malaria Day also represents an opportunity to come together to discuss potential solutions.

BERN

Bern is this year's capital for World Malaria Day, emphasising the pioneering research being undertaken in Switzerland to tackle the disease. Hosted by the Swiss Malaria Group, a ceremony and symposium is being held in the Federal Square with an opening video message from Dr Margaret Chan, Director-General of WHO. Topics of discussion include ‘A new era of global action to defeat malaria’, ‘People power against malaria: How to ensure people support malaria control and access to treatment’ and ‘Strengthening the supply chain of malaria control’.

CURRENT STRATEGIES

Updated in April 2015, the WHO Guidelines for the Treatment of Malaria report now includes the latest recommendations on preventive treatment for infants, children under the age of five and pregnant women. Uncomplicated cases should be treated with artemisinin-based combination therapies (ACTs), but many patients still do not have access to healthcare. In order to provide timely and effective treatment, rapid diagnostic tests are used to confirm malaria cases and reduce the wastage of malaria medication on other conditions. However, it is estimated that around 40 per cent of those with suspected malaria in Africa are not tested.

The WHO ‘Global malaria progress and challenges in 2016’ video explains that the level of malaria control achieved in the past 15 years was enabled by a huge scale up of effective malaria control tools. Mosquito nets are just one example that have protected millions from infection, illness and death. WHO reported, however, that in 2013 an estimated 278 million people in Africa still lived in households without any insecticide-treated nets.

TECHNICAL GUIDANCE

The World Health Assembly has adopted WHO’s Global Technical Strategy for Malaria 2016-2030 to help reduce the worldwide burden caused by malaria. It follows the same timeline as the Sustainable Development Goals and aims to eradicate malaria in at least 35 countries. The report explains the urgent need to scale up malaria responses towards eradication and investment in interventions, including preventive measures, diagnostic testing, treatment and disease surveillance. Emphasis is also placed on expanding research and harnessing innovation.

“By adopting this strategy, WHO Member States have endorsed the bold vision of a world free of malaria, and set the ambitious new target of reducing the global malaria burden by 90 per cent by 2030,” explains Chan. “They also agreed to strengthen health systems, address emerging multi-drug and insecticide resistance, and intensify national, cross-border and regional efforts to scale up malaria responses to protect everyone at risk.”

Malaria is both preventable and treatable. Working together, countries around the world can ensure that individuals and populations are safeguarded against this ubiquitous disease.

In recognition of World Malaria Day, International Innovation’s Stephanie Spurr provides insight into the successful strategies behind malaria prevention and treatment to date, and the necessary actions required to eradicate the world’s deadliest mosquito-borne disease once and for all.
Over the past 15 years there has been:

A 37% drop in new malaria cases
A 60% decrease in malaria-related deaths
A 65% decrease in deaths among children under the age of five

The Millennium Development Goal 6c to ‘HAVE HALTED BY 2015 AND BEGUN TO REVERSE THE INCIDENCE OF MALARIA AND OTHER MAJOR DISEASES’ was reached

10 countries with reported malaria cases in 2000 are now MALARIA-FREE

Nearly 60 countries have reduced their malaria cases by 75% or more
In 2015, over 400,000 people died of malaria, and 214 million new cases were diagnosed.

In Africa, 1/4 of children are not protected by mosquito nets or residual spraying, and around 1/2 of pregnant women at risk of malaria do not receive a single dose of preventive treatment.

On average, malaria kills a child every 60 seconds.

By 2030, the annual investment required to achieve a 90% malaria reduction will be US$8.7 billion.

Sources:
- www.who.int/gho/malaria/epidemic/cases/en
- www.who.int/topics/millennium_development_goals/diseases/en
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- www.worldmalaria-day.org/about/key-facts
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=x74I-4BZnRo&feature=youtu.be