

Malaria deaths fall in African nations

Wide distribution of mosquito nets, new medicine credited.

New York Times

Widespread distribution of mosquito nets and a new medicine sharply reduced malaria deaths in several African countries, World Health Organization researchers reported Thursday.

The report was one of the most hopeful signs in the long battle against a disease that is estimated to kill a million children a year in poor tropical countries.

"We saw a very drastic impact," said Dr. Arata Kochi, chief of malaria for the WHO. "If this is done everywhere, we can reduce the disease burden 80

percent in most African countries within five years."

There have been earlier reports of success with nets and the new medicine, artemisinin, a Chinese drug made from wormwood. But most have been based on relatively small samples; this is the first study to compare national programs.

"This is extremely exciting," said Dr. Michel Kazatchkine, executive director of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. "If we can scale up like this everywhere, we should be able to eliminate malaria as a major public health threat in many countries."

The report was done by a team from the World Health Organization for the Global Fund, the chief

financing agency for combating malaria. It looked at programs in four countries that tried to distribute mosquito nets to the families of every child younger than 5 and medicines containing artemisinin to every public clinic.

In Ethiopia, deaths of children from malaria dropped more than 50 percent. In Rwanda, they dropped more than 60 percent in only two months.

Zambia, Kochi said, had only about a 33 percent drop in overall deaths because nets ran short and many districts ran out of medicine. But those areas without such problems had 50 percent to 60 percent reductions, he said.

Ghana was a bit of a mystery, according to the report. It got little money from the Global Fund,

Kochi said, and so bought few nets and had to charge patients for drugs. Malaria deaths nonetheless fell 34 percent, but deaths among children for other reasons dropped 42 percent.

Holding drives to distribute insecticide-impregnated nets is a growing trend, now that the Global Fund, the President's Malaria Initiative, U.N. agencies, the World Bank and private fund-raisers like AgainstMalaria.org have offered hundreds of millions of dollars. Such drives must be continuous because "permanent" nets wear out after three to five years.

The report, finished in December, was an effort to find hard data, which has long been a problem with malaria.

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FDA warns of higher suicide risk from widely used epilepsy drugs

Associated Press

WASHINGTON - Epilepsy drugs used by millions of people may increase the risk of suicidal thoughts or behavior, the Food and Drug Administration warned Thursday in an alert to doctors.

The FDA analyzed almost 200 studies of 11 anti-seizure drugs, some that have been on the market for decades. The study

groups. What that means: For every 1,000 patients, about two more drug-treated patients experienced suicidal thoughts than placebo-takers, FDA concluded.

Anti-seizure drugs are used for a variety of illnesses in addition to epilepsy, including migraines, certain nerve-pain disorders and

expected the risk applied to every epilepsy drug. The FDA said it would work with manufacturers to add the warning to product labels.

Skipping epilepsy medication can result in seizures. An FDA spokeswoman said only that patients should ask a doctor before making medication changes

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U.S. Navy Announces Alternative Arrangements for Implementing the National Environmental Policy Act and Requests Public Input

On January 15, 2008, the Department of the Navy accepted alternative arrangements, approved by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). These alternative arrangements specifically address the use of mid-frequency active (MFA) sonar and its effects on marine mammals during Navy exercises in the Southern California (SOCAL) Operating Area. These exercises include Composite Training Unit Exercises (COMPTUEXs) and Joint Task Force Exercises (JTFFEXs) scheduled to occur between January 15, 2008 and January 23, 2008. A Decision Memorandum documenting the Navy's acceptance of these alternative arrangements was published in the Federal Register on January 24, 2008.

Information on the Navy's proposals for the SOCAL Operating Area including the full text of the Decision Memorandum is available at www.SOCALRangeComplexEIS.com.

The Navy will prepare a post-exercise assessment after each exercise. By this Notice, the Navy requests input from the public on the process for reviewing the post-exercise assessments. The Navy is also offering the public the opportunity to discuss the implementation of these alternative arrangements. Input on reviewing the post-exercise assessments and any requests to meet with Navy and CEQ representatives about the alternative arrangements may be submitted by contacting Mr. Alex Stone at (619) 545-8128 or in writing to:

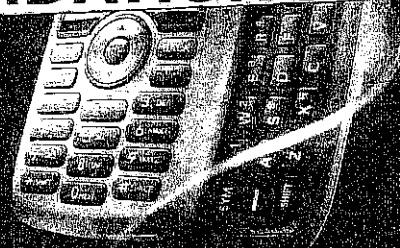
Naval Air Station North Island
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For more information about the Navy's Decision Memorandum, visit www.SOCALRangeComplexEIS.com.

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