

MALARIA IN SIERRA LEONE

In Sierra Leone and the world at large, one of the life-threatening diseases is Malaria which is caused by plasmodium parasites. This transmission to people/humans is caused by the bites of infected female Anopheles mosquitoes called malaria vectors. Unlike HIV/AIDS, it can be prevented and cured.

According to W.H.O, there were an estimated 229 just of malaria deaths stood at 409,000 in the same year. There are five (5) parasite species that cause malaria in humans, and two (2) of these species which are *P. falciparum* and *P. vivax* pose the greatest threat. *P. vivax* is the predominant parasite in the W.H.O Region of the Americas, representing 75% of malaria cases. Just as HIV and AIDS, the first symptoms which are fever, headache and chills may be mild and hardly recognized as malaria. *P. falciparum* malaria can progress to severe illness often leading to death if not treated within 24 hours. Certain symptoms like severe anaemia, respiratory distress in relation to metabolic acidosis, or cerebral malaria could be developed frequently by children with severe malaria. In adults, multi-organ failure is also frequent. In malaria-endemic areas, people may develop partial immunity, allowing asymptomatic infections to occur. Now let's think of what causes mosquitoes to dwell in our environments.

Waste sewage, filthy environments and all sorts of dirt's in our society and homes can serve as factors that attract mosquitoes to live in our communities. Stagnant contaminated water on the ground also serves as a breeding place or ground for mosquitoes. It is obvious that mosquitoes are not attracted to hygienic and clean environments.

History has it that some of Sierra Leone's Colonial Masters were driven away by mosquitoes which got them infected with malaria disease and also causing a huge number of them to die before they could fly back to their country. The environment by then was unhealthy and therefore more people lost their lives to malaria disease that infected them as there were no standard hospitals to treat such disease and anti-malaria drugs were not adequately made available in hospitals to people. The level of proneness to the malaria disease was high and is also still high in many areas where good hygienic measures are not in serious practice.

However, malaria disease could be treated and prevented by using anti-malaria drugs. For travelers, who may be potential carriers of malaria disease, malaria could be prevented through chemoprophylaxis, which suppresses the blood stage of malaria infections, thereby preventing malaria disease. W.H.O recommends at least three doses of intermittent preventive treatment with sulfadoxine-pyrimethamine at each scheduled antenatal visit after the first trimester for pregnant women living in moderate-to-high transmission areas. It can also be prevented and controlled by means of access to vector control interventions. However, resistance to insecticides among Anopheles mosquitoes could threaten these gains. Early diagnosis and treatment of malaria reduces disease and prevents deaths.

The most commonly used and appropriate measure for preventing malaria disease is the use of insecticide-treated mosquito nets. It is of great essence for us as a people to keep our inverter always so that mosquitoes would you not be attracted to them. it is in the news that a vaccine for the prevention of malaria has been developed which is believed to be of help to humans.

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