

HIV/AIDS AND MALARIA CAN BE STOPPED

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Guest Editorial

"Never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."(1)

The twin scourges of malaria and HIV/AIDS threaten the health, the economy and the political stability of Africa. Using recent epidemiology data from Kisumu, Kenya, Abu-Raddad and colleagues persuasively argue that malaria in the presence of HIV/AIDS not only compounds the sickness and death due to each, but intensifies the transmission of both diseases.(2) So pervasive is this menace, that an estimated 1 million pregnant African women per year suffer in the long dark shadow of dual infection.(3)

Malaria alone kills more than 3,000 children every day, and annually sickens 500,000,000 men, women and children. Malaria wreaks economic havoc among this small planet's poorest nations, imposing death, sickness, treatment costs, and educational delays thus insidiously replace hope with despair.(4)

Not long ago, United States citizens faced malaria as a quotidian threat. From the settlers at Jamestowne, to the patriots of Washington's Continental Army, to the last domestic cases in the Tennessee Valley in the 1950s, generations of Americans accepted malaria as routine. Today, millions of Americans work and play, oblivious that they live a malaria-free existence in what were once malaria transmission zones for their grandparents and great-grandparents.

Enough is enough. Malaria is a curable disease. The 3.4 billion human beings at risk of malaria lack accurate and timely diagnosis, potent drugs, and mosquito control (insecticide treated nets, indoor residual spraying). Implementation of these measures, and development of a desperately needed malaria vaccine, will eliminate this scourge.

HIV/AIDS can be stopped. The desperate need in Africa to treat HIV/AIDS, to eliminate vertical trans-

mission from mother to child, and to educate the populace regarding the need for diagnosis, prevention and treatment, is no less terrible than the peril of malaria.

The bell tolls for millions of Africans struck down by malaria and HIV/AIDS. It tolls for the future, the children who will never know their parents, never go to school, never become mothers and fathers, never teach school, never farm their land, never build their dreams, and never write large their hopes on this fertile continent of promise.

It is time for the privileged to end the death knell of malaria and HIV/AIDS in Africa.

References

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