

c Odyssean malaria

On the 18th January 2017, the Outbreak Response Unit was notified of a case of malaria at Dr Yusuf Dadoo Hospital, Gauteng Province. A team comprising members from NICD, District Health Services, Environmental Health and CDC programmes conducted a malaria case investigation at Greenhills and Pelzvale, Randfontein.

The patient, a 16-months-old girl residing at Greenhills, with no history of recent travel to malaria affected regions, presented with fever and vomiting on the 6th January 2017. This was after a short visit to her grandparents in Pelzvale, Randfontein. An astute nurse recommended a malaria test and subsequent tests confirmed presence of *P. falciparum*. She was immediately transferred and admitted at Leratong Hospital for treatment.

An entomological investigation was conducted at the parents' and grandparents' residences and surrounds. All mosquito larvae collected at the case-patient residence were identified as *Culex* spp. and malaria vectors (*Anopheles* spp.) were not found at any of the two sites.

It is possible that the case-patient acquired malaria from the bite of an infective *Anopheles* mosquito inadvertently translocated from a malaria endemic

area via a vehicle such as a minibus, car or bag – thus this is an odyssean malaria case rather than any evidence of local transmission. Based on the date of onset of illness (3rd Jan 2017), it is likely that she was infected while visiting grandparents from 17-20th December 2016. Of possible relevance is that her visit was just two days after a long-distance minibus was in the area picking up travellers, amongst them a neighbour that was diagnosed with malaria (8th Jan 2017) shortly after his return from Zimbabwe.

The malaria season (Sept-Apr) in South Africa overlaps two festive seasons, characterised by heavy traffic to and from the malaria-endemic areas in South Africa and the neighbouring countries (Mozambique, Zimbabwe). Thus an unusual malaria case in non-endemic area can be expected, particularly when travellers return to Gauteng Province. Healthcare practitioners are encouraged to be vigilant with respect to malaria in all patients presenting with unexplained fever (>38°C) and flu-like illness, even in the absence of a travel history.

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