

Travel Medicine & International Health Unit

BACKGROUND

This unit was established in April 2008 within the Epidemiology Division and aims to be a centre for travel health-related activities and liaison and consulting for international health matters.

ACTIVITIES, HIGHLIGHTS & ACHIEVEMENTS

CONSULTATIONS

Provision of pre- and post-travel health advice and consultations for travel health practitioners, and for staff of the National Health Laboratory Service, in particular those of the National Institute for Communicable Diseases on work-related travel for field activities and conferences.

Consultation with international focal points, institutes and health practitioners for South African travellers presenting with infectious diseases abroad, and for foreign nationals with suspected infectious diseases after travel to Southern Africa. Recent examples have included the following: an Irish volunteer who died of rabies contracted 2 years previously in a wildlife sanctuary in Limpopo South Africa following on a dog exposure (see picture below); a South African chef who died in USA with a pseudomonas septicaemia secondary to aplastic anaemia; a South African businessman who died in Brazil as a result of African tick bite fever, initially diagnosed as suspected new arena virus. Expert consultations to medical practitioners for travel-related diseases including trypanosomiasis, severe malaria and filariasis, eosinophilia.



Monkey sanctuary in Limpopo Province



Trypanosomal chancre of East African trypanosomiasis

GUIDELINES

National guidelines for treatment of malaria 2008/9
National guidelines for prevention of malaria 2008/9
South African Travel Advisory for Confederation Cup and FIFA World Cup
National Yellow Fever Guidelines (in progress)
Guidelines for the Medical Profession for prevention of rabies a one of the editors (in press)

CAPACITY BUILDING

Dr Blumberg is a lecturer and examiner for the Certificate in Travel Medicine, University of the Witwatersrand, an annual course that trains 100 practitioners, in collaboration with the South African Society of Travel Medicine. The 2008 course was held at the NICD.

EXPERT COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Dr Blumberg is a member of the following:-
Malaria Advisory Group to the National Dept of Health, and the Subcommittee for Chemotherapy and Therapy
National Rabies Advisory Group
National Outbreak and Response Team

INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS

Dr Blumberg attended the WHO Clinical Network/ Epidemic Alert and Response meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, November 2008.

