

(H5N8).

Individuals working in close contact with potentially infected birds and presenting with influenza-like illness (cough, fever, sore throat, runny nose), conjunctivitis or difficulty breathing, are encouraged to consult with a health care provider and to inform the health provider of the potential exposure to infected birds. Healthcare workers who encounter patients meeting the above case definition can access case investigation forms and sample collection materials by calling the NICD doctor on call at 082-883-9920.

Control measures, including the humane culling of infected and potentially-infected poultry are implemented in affected farms. Poultry and poultry prod-

ucts that are available for sale in retail outlets are safe for human consumption. Additional information can be accessed at www.nicd.ac.za

Source: Centre for Respiratory Diseases and Meningitis, NICD-NHLS; (cheryl@nicd.ac.za)

c Odyssean malaria in Pretoria and Kempton Park, Gauteng Province, October 2017

Seven malaria cases affecting persons with no recent travel to malaria transmission areas were reported during October in Kilner Park, Pretoria (four patients in two families), Theresa Park, Akasia, Pretoria (one patient) and Kempton Park, Ekurhuleni (two patients, who were friends). Some patients required intensive care, and unfortunately, one patient died. The NICD is assisting district and provincial health authorities with entomological and epidemiological investigations. No vector mosquito-breeding around the patients' residences was evident. It is therefore likely that *Anopheles* malaria vector mosquitoes which were accidentally transported by vehicles from malaria areas, were responsible. This is called Odyssean malaria, also known as airport, suitcase, minibus, or taxi-rank malaria.

The occurrence of these cases does not mean that malaria is spreading to new areas. However, local residents should take preventive measures against mosquito bites in and around their homes, and seek medical attention for rapidly worsening 'flu-like illness (fever, chills, headache, muscle and joint pains).

Since 2007, 72 cases of Odyssean malaria have been recorded in South Africa, mostly in Gauteng Province. Absence of a travel history often leads to delayed diagnosis of malaria, with influenza most commonly assumed as the cause of illness. The case fatality rate of 14% is about ten times that of the national average for malaria. Medical practitioners should be aware of the similar presentation of influenza and early malaria infection, understand that a negative malaria test does not necessarily rule out the diagnosis, and be aware to re-test if illness persists or gets worse. The chance finding of abnormally low platelet counts in blood samples tested for unexplained illness, may indicate malaria infection and should be urgently investigated for this possibility.

Source: Centre for Emerging, Zoonotic and Parasitic Disease, NICD-NHLS; (johnf@nicd.ac.za)

d Anticipating the summer malaria season, 2017

Although it is early in the season, unusually high numbers of malaria cases are being reported from malaria transmission areas in Mpumalanga (including the Kruger National Park, Bushbuck Ridge, Komatipoort), Limpopo (Mopane, Vembhe districts), and also from the Waterberg (along the Lephalala river). The malaria control programme has commenced household spraying in these areas with long-acting residual insecticides (IRS) which targets indoor-feeding mosquitoes.

Early diagnosis and treatment of malaria essential strategy to reduce morbidity and mortality. Coartem is the drug of choice for uncomplicated malaria. Intravenous artesunate (Garsun®) has been licenced and is available, and recommended as the

drug of choice for the treatment of complicated or severe malaria.

Travellers from or residents of malaria transmission areas in South Africa or countries north of our borders who present with fever and flu-like illness should have a malaria test. Travellers to malaria areas including the Kruger National Park should take precautions to prevent mosquito bites, and consider chemoprophylaxis.

Source: Centre for Emerging, Zoonotic and Parasitic Diseases, NICD-NHLS; (johnf@nicd.ac.za)