

MALARIA CASES IN TAIWAN, 2002-2005

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BACKGROUND/AIMS: Malaria remains one of the major health challenges in the world today. In Taiwan, the eradication of malaria was achieved in 1965; however, there are about 30 imported cases every year. This review illustrates the epidemiology of malaria cases in Taiwan during 2002-2005.

METHODS: There were 111 confirmed malaria cases reported to Taiwan CDC from 2002 to 2005. We retrospectively reviewed the investigation records.

RESULTS: Of the 111 confirmed cases, 88 (79%) were male. The average age was 41(range 3~70); most cases (90%) were in the 21-60 years age range. Two cases didn't have any travel history and were seen as introduced infection; 109 patients came from or had travel history to malaria-endemic areas. Among patients with travel history, the main destinations were Southeast Asia (37%), Sub-Saharan Africa (36%) and Oceania (17%). Most were native persons (77%). The main reasons for travel of native cases were business and tourism (63% and 18%). *P. falciparum* and *P. vivax* accounted for 90% cases (47%, 43%). There were seventeen complicated-malaria cases (fifteen cases were falciparum malaria and 2 were mixed infection). Three deaths were recorded, all native cases. Only 14 (13%) patients had used chemoprophylaxis but information of regimen and compliance were not available. Clinically, fever and chills were the most frequent initial symptoms (100%, 81%). The median number of clinic-hospital visits needed to get a proper diagnosis was 2 (range: 1~6). Average time between being reported and symptom onset was 13 days (range: 1~231).

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS: In Taiwan, malaria is still a health threat for international travelers, especially for long-stay workers in endemic areas. Malaria should be suspected for patients with fever and travel history. Travelers should be encouraged to use barrier methods and chemoprophylaxis.

Keyword: malaria, epidemiology, traveler