



Travel health update

Travel health can be complicated, and advice for health professionals and travellers is ever-changing. In this regular feature, Jane Chiodini seeks out and presents the latest travel advice and information to help you keep your practice up to date. She also revisits areas of on-going concern, for spot checks and further clarification

RISK FACTORS FOR MALARIA

A research paper in the *BMJ* (27 March 2012) reviewed more than 25,000 notified cases of *Plasmodium falciparum* malaria during the period 1987 to 2006, of whom 184 patients died. While the burden of morbidity from malaria is found in those of African heritage who visit friends and relatives (VFRs), the study highlighted that the risk of dying from this disease is highest in the elderly, in tourists and in patients presenting for treatment in areas of the UK where malaria is seldom seen. In addition, there was a seasonal risk with a clear peak of cases in December. Travellers to the Gambia, a popular destination for winter sun holidays, were at particular risk.

The authors suggested that certain groups of travellers would benefit from targeted pre-travel advice which included emphasis on prompt presentation to healthcare facilities on the development of a febrile illness. This action must be taken early if they become unwell on return, so that diagnosis is not delayed. Such groups include the older traveller, travellers born in countries not endemic for malaria and those travelling on 'winter sun' holidays, particularly to the Gambia. Advice on prevention of malaria including chemoprophylaxis is also of the utmost importance in this group and remains so, as ever, for the VFR travellers too. To read the paper in full, go to <http://www.bmj.com/content/344/bmj.e2116>

NATHNAC IN THE NEWS

The Health Protection Agency announced the appointment two joint Directors of the National Travel Health Network and Centre earlier this month. Dr Vanessa Field was formerly an Associate Specialist in NaTHNaC and is Editor-in-Chief of the *Health Information for Overseas Travel Yellow Book* published in 2010. Dr Dipti Patel has previously worked at MASTA, has considerable experience working with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and is also trained in Occupational Health Medicine. Both Dr Field and Dr Patel are Fellows of the Faculty of Travel Medicine, trained on the Glasgow Travel Medicine Diploma course, and have general practice backgrounds. Their appointment is great news for UK travel medicine.

IDENTIFYING IMMUNISATIONS

I was recently presenting at the Oxford Vaccine Group Annual Immunisation Seminar and stayed for the whole day, the meeting was both interesting and stimulating. I no longer undertake routine childhood immunisations so the update was very useful as such knowledge remains important in an overall travel risk assessment to ensure vaccines for life in the UK are current. It's easy to lose touch when not doing work on a regular basis so I was glad to be reminded of resources to help us identify vaccines that may have been given in other countries. One I wasn't aware of was a chart that translates the vaccine preventable diseases into a number of Eastern and Western European languages. View at <http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p5122.pdf>. Another wonderful page of resources for vaccination can be found at www.hpa.org.uk then do a search on 'vaccination related websites'. This provides all the key topics in one place!

TRAVEL MEDICINE IN DUBLIN

The 4th Northern European Conference on Travel Medicine is to be held in Dublin - June 6th - 8th 2012. If you have a passion for travel medicine then these events are exhilarating, with numerous expert speakers on all aspects of the subject, a full social programme and a nurses welcome reception planned. With special rates for nurses, and involvement of the Royal College of Nursing, this is an event that a true enthusiast should not miss! For more information see www.nectm.com



Winter sun-seekers in the Gambia

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Jane is a travel health specialist nurse with 20 years' experience of seeing travellers in a primary care setting. She has been training practice nurses in travel health for many years and is passionate about designing tools and materials for nurses to use in practice, which can be found at www.janechiodini.co.uk

