

NEWS RELEASE



1 February 2008
For immediate use

STUDY HIGHLIGHTS IMPORTANCE OF MALARIA TABLETS

A recent study has shown that Australian travellers who do not adhere to their doctor's instructions when taking malaria pills have a dramatically increased risk of contracting the potentially fatal virus.

Of 38 Australians who were studied after having trekked the Kokoda trail in Papua New Guinea, there were six confirmed cases of malaria due to participants either not taking preventative tablets or stopping their course of treatment too early.

Two trekkers who did not take any malaria prevention pills were both diagnosed with malaria and a further four of 24 trekkers developed malaria on their return because they stopped taking their pills too early.

Of the 12 participants who took their pills as recommended by their medical practitioner, not one came down with malaria.

Statistics suggest that approximately 900 people annually return to Australia with malaria and according to Dr Deborah Mills, one of Australia's leading travel health experts, this number could be reduced much closer to zero.

"Some travellers are reticent to take malaria tablets because they hear stories that the tablets don't work, but what people don't realise is if they followed their preventative course of malaria tablets to the letter, the tablets work very well," said Dr Deb.

"Medication fails because travellers don't swallow the tablets. Travellers also worry about side effects, but the side effects are never as bad, severe or as life threatening as experiencing malaria, which, patients have told me, is like being hit by a bus."

Malaria is transmitted by the bite of an infected mosquito and the shortest time recorded between getting a malaria fever and being brain dead is 60 hours.

"Malaria deaths are 100 percent preventable and with good preventative travel health care, there is no reason that any Australian needs to expose themselves to such a risk," Dr Deb said.

Dr Deborah Mills, who is Australia's foremost travel medicine specialist having provided travel medicine advice to patients for 20 years, is also the author of Australia's most popular medical travel book 'Travelling Well' which is in its fourteenth edition and has 125,000 copies in print.

For more information:
Kerry McDuling 0410 578 194