

2 SEASONAL DISEASES

a The impact of drought on the 2015/6 malaria season

For the months January and February, substantially fewer malaria cases and deaths were reported in 2016, compared with the same period in 2015 (Figure 2), with 64% and 90% reductions, respectively.

The severe drought in the region is probably the main contributor to the year-to-year drop in numbers of cases. There has been a two-thirds reduction in the reported case mortality rate in the period, from 1.2% in 2015 to 0.38% in 2016, but this aspect can only be fully assessed when the whole season is reviewed. The proportion of locally-acquired malaria dropped from 51% in 2015 to 21% in 2016, while the share of imported cases increased from 46% in 2015 to 72% in 2016. These changes probably reflect drought impact but meaningful analysis of the relative contributions of local versus imported cases will likewise have to wait until the malaria season is over. There is likely to be an increase in the numbers of malaria cases in

March and April because of recent widespread rainfall, and travel over Easter and other upcoming public and school holidays. Healthcare workers should ensure that they inform prospective travellers to malaria transmission areas about the danger of malaria, and about measures to reduce the risk, such as prevention of mosquito bites (covering up exposed skin after dusk; antimosquito repellents, coils, mats, sprays, bednet and clothing impregnation); and appropriate chemoprophylaxis. See NICD website ([http://www.nicd.ac.za/?page=malaria fact sheet&id=181](http://www.nicd.ac.za/?page=malaria%20fact%20sheet&id=181)) for more information and the malaria risk map for South Africa.

Source: Centre for Hospital, Opportunistic and Tropical Infections (COHI), NICD-NHLS (johnf@nicd.ac.za). Gauteng Provincial Department of Health, and Malaria Directorate, National Department of Health.

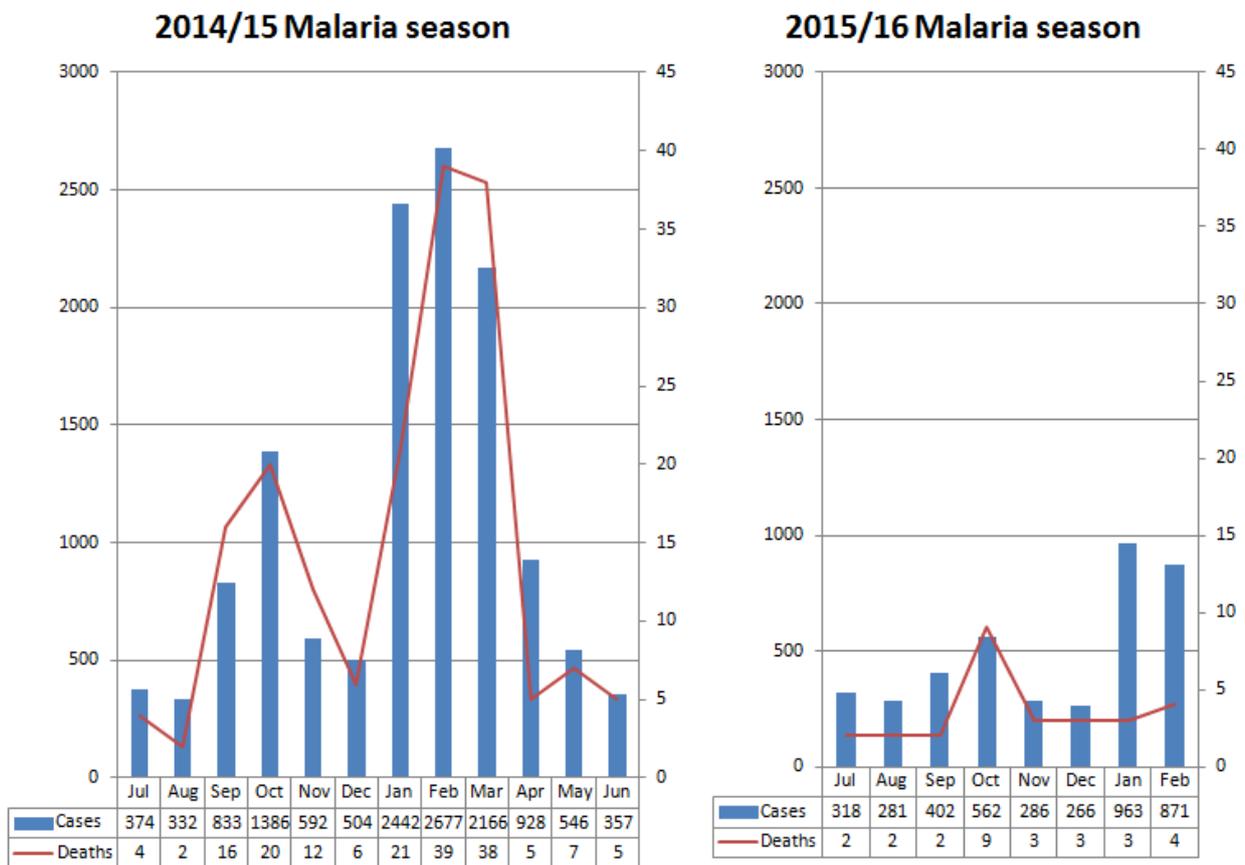


Figure 2. A comparison of 2014/15 and 2015/16 malaria seasons in South Africa showing the reported numbers of cases and deaths (data courtesy the Malaria directorate, National Department of Health)