

4 SEASONAL DISEASES

b An outbreak of Odyssean malaria in Fochville, Gauteng Province

In the April 2016 Communiqué, three probable cases of Odyssean malaria were reported from the Fochville area that had occurred in March 2016. The cases involved a 31-year-old female (index case) and two other cases - a 47 year-old grandfather and his six-year-old grandson. All three patients had no travel history over the past 12 months. The two families resided within 180 m of each other, but were otherwise unrelated. All three cases presented to the health system with flu-like symptoms. However the absence of a travel history delayed the diagnoses. The 31-year-old female died, while the other patients recovered with no adverse clinical outcomes.

Fochville is a farming and mining town situated in the Gauteng Province under the West Rand District and within the Merafong City Local Municipality. A site visit to the residential properties of the patients one week following notification of the cases was conducted. Entomological investigations indoors in the bedrooms where the patients are assumed to have slept around the time of probable infection, revealed no mosquitoes. Similarly, outdoor investigations revealed no breeding sites. There was no evidence of informal settlements near the town and the only major roads of note are the R500 and the N12 highway, which are 600 m and 9 km, respectively, from the two residences.

These three unusual cases once again highlight the

importance of clinical vigilance and a high index of suspicion for malaria in anyone with flu-like symptoms. Malaria should be suspected especially when thrombocytopenia ($<150 \times 10^9/L$) occurs in the context of a febrile illness, even in the absence of a travel history. This is especially important in mining and farming areas where migration within and across borders can result in the importation of infectious mosquitoes from malaria-endemic regions within South Africa (Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo provinces) as well as outside South African borders (especially Zimbabwe and Mozambique). Cases of imported malaria commonly increase after holiday seasons and public-holiday periods throughout the year. Malaria is a notifiable disease in South Africa and each diagnosed case must be reported to health authorities. Malaria guidelines are available at <http://www.gov.za/documents/guidelines-treatment-malaria-south-africa>

Source: Centre for Opportunistic, Tropical and Hospital Infections, NICD-NHLS; Division of Public Health Surveillance and Response, NICD-NHLS; Gauteng Provincial Department of Health, West Rand)