



Understanding Malaria

Impacts of Malaria

Transcript

Narrator: Right now, there are roughly 7.5 billion people living on our planet. A little more than three billion of them are at risk of contracting a parasitic disease known as malaria. Transmitted by the bite of mosquitoes, this illness destroys red blood cells, causing intense fever, aches, vomiting, and extreme lethargy.

James Tibenderana understands these symptoms better than many. Not only is he the technical director of the Malaria Consortium, a charity in the United Kingdom that provides advice on this serious disease, James has also had firsthand experience of this illness during his childhood in Africa.

Dr Tibenderana: When I was a toddler, I had a really high fever. My parents had never had malaria before, but my father remembered from his school health that a child with very high fever could have malaria. So, in the middle of the night, he took me to the hospital, and the doctor found out that I had a lot of malaria parasites in my blood. And he told me that if I had been brought, let's say the next morning, chances are I could have died.

Narrator: James was indeed fortunate. Of the 290 million people infected around the world in 2017, just under half a million lost their lives as a direct result of the disease. About nine out of every 10 of these deaths occur in African nations, south of the Sahara, making it a major contributor to mortality in this part of the world. Sadly, most are young children.

In 2019, close to 300,000 African children succumbed to malaria before their fifth birthday. Even where malaria isn't fatal, it is a disease that significantly affects families and the surrounding community.

Dr Tibenderana: On average, an episode of uncomplicated malaria will result in something like 10 to 14 days lost of work. Severe malaria, which may require a person to be admitted, either a child or an adult, could take even longer. There are some estimates that go as much as anywhere between 20 to 30 days lost. And remember, if that person is a child, it means that one of the parents, or sometimes two of the parents, may not be able to work during that time because they will have to be looking after the child. So you may have a situation where a father or a mother is in the hospital looking after a child, and the other parent has to be at home looking after the other children.





Understanding Malaria

Impacts of Malaria

Transcript

- Narrator: Just looking after loved ones isn't cheap. Medication can cost around U.S.\$30 per episode. That might not sound like a great deal, but for many living in poverty, especially those who aren't working, it could put treatment out of reach.
- Dr Tibenderana: Malaria prevents 25% of household income. So households are 25% poorer because of malaria. On average, the impact on Africa is the fact that \$12 billion is lost on things like healthcare, absenteeism from work, from school, as well as loss of productivity.
- Narrator: Many nations affected by malaria lose out on tourist dollars, as well as foreign investment. Few companies are willing to risk sending workers to affected areas. These dollars add up, leaving little to fund measures that can fight the spread of malaria in the first place.
- Dr Tibenderana: On average, the cost of getting a diagnosis for malaria is up to about \$10. On average, the cost of getting a treatment for simple malaria, or what we call uncomplicated malaria, is up to about \$30. The cost of treating severe malaria can get up to about \$150, on average. And these costs are very high for a poor rural family, whether in Asia or in Africa. And what that means is that poor families will look for alternative measures to either treat a simple or an uncomplicated case, or severe case. And many of those alternative measures are not effective.
- Narrator: For individuals infected with the parasite, malaria is a traumatic, if not devastating illness. But for communities who live under the constant threat of the disease, it can be a serious obstacle to building a better life for its people.

