

Manna from Brisbane

From Jenny Horton of Kenmore Club
on the Polio Eradication Trail



"Jenny Horton" <yen283@gmail.com>

30 January 2010

G'day Friends

I cannot believe how quickly we move from one year to the next, but 2010 is here and let's pray that this year is a great one for all and for polio eradication.

I returned to Australia from Nigeria mid December and was really thankful for the opportunity to serve humanity in this role in another incredible country and to be able to return home to have Christmas with my Mum.

Polio Global Update

Total Cases Wild Polio Virus	2008 Total	Jan 01-Dec31 2008*	Jan 01-Dec 31 2009*
Globally	1651	1624	1579
Pakistan	117	117	87
India	559	551	721
Afghanistan	31	31	37
Nigeria	798	788	389
No of countries with virus.	18	17	23

*WHO data as of 12 Jan 2010

We will still see the data from 2009 changing for the next few months as the investigation of AFP (Acute Flaccid Paralysis) cases occurring in 2009 continues. Cases are investigated up to 90 days after the date of onset of paralysis with specimens taken up to 60 days after paralysis.



Vaccine for all



And

It's free!

Ideally specimens should be taken within the first 2 weeks after the onset of paralysis, as this is when the poliovirus is shed at its highest rate. This is one reason why there is such an emphasis on involving the community in case-detection and sensitizing the relevant persons according to the health-seeking behaviour of each community.

In Ethiopia, often people go to a priest or a "hakim" (herbalist) as their first line of support for health issues. In Nigeria, I saw that traditional healers and herbalists played a major role in the area where I worked.

Some countries also have "quacks" (unqualified persons who offer medical treatment). As these are cheaper than a doctor, their advice is often sought. So surveillance systems are set up to include these persons in order to detect all AFP cases as soon as possible.

The target for 2009 was to interrupt circulation of WPV1 (wild poliovirus type 1). Although this did not happen, we saw progress. The table below shows the breakdown of virus by strain. We can see that India and Nigeria have maintained a very low rate of WPV1 cases. This was achieved by the use of monovalent 1 vaccine.

This focus left an opening for type 3 virus to take hold in India, thus the increase in cases there. Late 2009, a new bivalent vaccine containing type 1 & 3 strains of polio virus was introduced & studies show that the seroconversion to both strains of virus is high which will assist with this rise in the non-focused strain of virus. This is a new tool in the war.

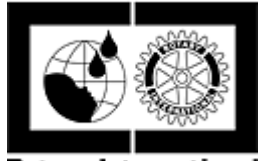
	2008		2009	
	WPV1	WPV3	WPV1	WPV3
Pakistan	81	36	60*	27
India	70	481	80*	641
Afghanistan	25	6	16	21
Nigeria	719	68	75	314
Global Total	965	658	476	1101

*includes 1 case WPV1+WPV3

WHO data as of 12 Jan 2010

Reflections from Nigeria

It was a great time to work as part of the Nigerian team and truly I must honour my colleagues who are working relentlessly to improve the routine immunization of children and stamp out polio. 2009



Manna from Brisbane

From Jenny Horton of Kenmore Club
on the Polio Eradication Trail



"Jenny Horton" <yen283@gmail.com>

30 January 2010

saw a real push by the Nigerian Government, at all levels, supporting the Polio Eradication Initiative PEI.

It also saw increased participation of the traditional rulers headed by the Emirs with involvement of all traditional heads down to the village level. In northern Nigeria, the traditional leaders are very influential and at the lower levels know their community personally.

I was privileged enough to meet the Emir of Dass in Bauchi State, as he toured the Emirate requesting the support of his constituents for PEI and routine immunization. He also worked with the LGA/ward and village traditional leaders on a daily basis.



With my colleagues



With the Emir

There are some areas in which I was working where the routine immunization completion was as low as 45% of target children. So there is still plenty to do to sustain the good works we have seen this year.

It was so incredible to work with the Bauchi WHO team and the Bauchi Ministry of Primary Health. I feel like I have a new family in Nigeria and am thankful to the community who not only welcomed me but make me feel "at home". The push to reach the goal of zero polio cases really stretches the staff, who, a majority of the time are working at least one day of every weekend and very often both days without complaint.

Truly these people on the ground are the key to success, as if the drops do not get into the child's mouth we will never win. So I sincerely thank them.

Working in polio has shown me team work as I have never known it. I was told "there is room for everyone in polio eradication" and this is certainly true. It is an amazing experience to be so involved at different levels with all the spearheading partners.

Thank you

Polio eradication is only possible because funds are available for the program. Now over a \$6 billion program there is still a need for finances. So for those busily running fundraising projects, I thank you. I know many Rotary Clubs in Australia are planning activities for awareness and fundraising in February.

Australia's last WPV was in 1978 but we are still open to re-introduction of virus while there is virus anywhere in the world.

I have been blessed to belong to the Brisbane Post Polio Support Group who have been a real motivation for me. This group is coordinated by Hugh Banney, who recently was recognized as a Rotary Paul Harris Fellow by Past Rotary Director Brian Knowles.



Brian, Hugh and me



One of our Nigerian families

Brian was actively involved in the Western Pacific being declared "Polio Free". Hugh a hearty congratulations and thanks for the dedication to making life easier for those in our community who are suffering the late effects of polio.

As we have entered the New Year, I wish all a blessed 2010 and a safe and peaceful year where our thoughts are with those less fortunate than ourselves.

Jenny
STOP Team 33 (Stop Transmission of Polio)