

## Case Study: Campaign to end the sale of electronic mosquito repellents

### 'Killer' fact

Electronic mosquito repellents were withdrawn from sale on evidence provided by a Cochrane Review.

### Summary

The Effective Health Care Research Consortium teamed up with advocacy website MalariaWorld in a campaign to stop the sale of electronic mosquito repellents by major airlines. The issue being that these electronic repellents, sold to airline passengers, many on their way to malaria endemic countries, do not work.

Dr. Bart Knols, editor of the advocacy website MalariaWorld discovered that electronic repellents were being sold on KLM flights. The publicity claimed that the 'device emits a low frequency sound that is unbearable to mosquitoes' and Knols, knowing there was evidence that these sound emitting devices don't work and could give travelers the false impression that they were protected against mosquitoes and in turn malaria, took action.

Armed with the Cochrane Systematic Review, produced by the Cochrane Infectious Diseases Group and first published in 2007, which clearly demonstrates that electronic repellents do not work, Knols approached KLM with the subsequent positive result that the airline withdrew these electronic repellents from sale from March 2010 onwards. Knols with ongoing support from the Effective Health Care Research Consortium then approached British Airways who also agreed to withdraw the products from sale from May 2010 onwards. A response is still awaited from Singapore Airlines.

The Cochrane review rigorously examines all relevant, reliable research, and these reviews are recognised as being authoritative, state-of-the-art summaries.

"These electronic repellents should not be manufactured, advertised or used to prevent mosquito bites and malaria," said co-author of the review Professor Paul Garner. Along with Dr. Ali Enayati from the Mazandaran University of Medical Sciences and Professor Hemingway Director of the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, they carefully analysed 10 studies and found there was absolutely no data to support their use. Professor Garner went on to say "These devices appeal to customers but they simply don't work. They don't repel mosquitoes and they don't prevent people getting bitten."

### Impact

Where the electronic mosquito repellents have been withdrawn from sale – there is a direct benefit to any traveller/ member of the public who will no longer be able to buy a product which does not work and hopefully switch to products that do work. The Effective Health Care Research Consortium through the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine's Well Travelled Clinics has provided advice to BA on the efficacy of other available mosquito repellent products. This shows that evidence-based research, together with strong advocacy can have a direct impact on policy (KLM, BA) and decision making and practice (members of the public).



Photo: CDC/James Gathany

## Researchers

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## Further information

To read Bart Knols' blog on MalariaWorld and follow this story:

<http://www.malariaworld.org/blog/klm-airline-acts-responsibly>

To read the Cochrane review '**Electronic mosquito repellents for preventing mosquito bites and malaria infection**':

<http://www.mrw.interscience.wiley.com/cochrane/clsysrev/articles/CD005434/frame.html>

R4D:

<http://www.research4development.info/news.asp?ArticleID=50590>

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