

Yaws study a success

YAWS, a chronic infectious disease that mostly affects children, is one step closer to eradication, with a new treatment and different treatment approach showing excellent results in a new study.

Conducted at Lihir Medical Centre in collaboration with the Centre for International Health Research of Barcelona, the study is funded by International SOS and Newcrest Mining as part of a sustainability and development program on Lihir Island.

A spokesperson from International SOS said the pilot study was assessing the World Health Organisation's new strategy for eradicating the disease.

The results, published in February in the New England Journal of Medicine, show a significant decrease in the prevalence of Yaws following mass treatments of residents of rural villages in Papua New Guinea.

Yaws is a chronic infection that primarily affects the skin and bones of people under 15 years old, it is transmitted mainly through direct skin contact with an infected person and if left untreated it can lead to severe deforming bone lesions.

It mainly affects populations living in overcrowded conditions with poor water



An International SOS doctor who was involved in the Yaws study in Lihir, working in the community. Image courtesy of International SOS.

supply, personal hygiene and lack of sanitation.

International SOS co-founder Arnaud Vaissie said the study was a great example of what could be achieved through a genuine partnership between corporate, industry and science.

"We are extremely proud to be involved in this important study, which is not only having a positive impact on local communities but it is informing global intelligence of yaws and guiding strategies to achieve its eradication," he said.

"The funding model of this research

demonstrates how foreign companies can contribute to improving the health and wellbeing of people affected by neglected tropical diseases at local, national and global levels."

An International SOS spokesperson later said the group's commitment to working with the local community had made it the largest employer of medical professionals outside the Papua New Guinean government.

"Over 90% of our 400 strong workforce are Papua New Guinea nationals," they said. ●

CCA

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