

# Malaria PSA uses humor to spread disease awareness

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In this June 14, 2010 file photo, actor B.J. Novak arrives to host the 14th Annual Webby Awards in New York. (AP Photo/Charles Sykes, file)

(AP) -- A new public service announcement irreverently suggests one way to solve the malaria problem in Africa: Recruit a cadre of sexy mosquitoes called La Femme Mosquita to seduce and kill their disease-carrying counterparts.

It's one example of the humor the nonprofit group [Malaria No More](#) hopes will spread awareness in eliminating the deadly disease.

B.J. Novak, star of the NBC sitcom "The Office," likes the "laugh with

us and not at us" approach. He and other celebrities including Ed Helms, Elizabeth Banks, John Mayer, and Orlando Bloom are lending their support to the group through a series of TV spots and viral videos.

Novak said that public service announcements historically have gotten little respect, despite the importance of their causes, making them ripe for ridicule. The ubiquitous "This is your brain on drugs" ad that showed an egg frying was satirized in "Nightmare on Elm Street" with Johnny Depp getting whacked in the head with frying pan by Freddy Krueger.

One of the funniest spots in the Malaria No More campaign stars Helms as a big-game hunter. In the three-minute video, the actor suggests alternative techniques to kill malaria-borne mosquitoes, such as biting back.

Helms traveled to Senegal to observe the problem and produce the spot. He called it "an incredible adventure" that he hopes will raise awareness. He feels the campaign can educate a broad audience, and he also hopes to "piss off a few [mosquitoes](#) in the process."

Malaria was eradicated in the United States in the early 1950s, but still looms in the third world. In Africa, 2,000 children die every day from malaria, according to Malaria No More, which breaks down to a death every 45 seconds.

Other tools to fight malaria include mosquito nets, insecticide and effective medicine. Banks sees those measures as the most effective but finds Helms' approach works, too.

"He for sure is using the other best medicine to fight malaria," Banks said. "Humor."

Most of the money raised for Malaria No More centers around \$10

donations that come from texting to the word NET to 85944.

Global funding initiatives aim to end the threat of malaria in five years.

Said Novak: "Looking at it simply by the numbers, the math works out very well."

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