



Reactive Oxygen

Doctor treats remote tribe in Papua, Indonesian New Guinea

By Matoke Holdings Ltd,

January 9, 2017

What is it like to swap the daily routine of a Hampshire hospital consultant for one of the least explored jungles on Earth? Dr Matthew Dryden, who pioneered Reactive Oxygen™ technology, treated some of the remote Korowai tribe who live in Papua, Indonesian New Guinea.

Flying across the world and trekking deep into the jungle to meet a Stone Age people is not how most people spend their holiday. But Dr Dryden, consultant microbiologist at Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, is an experienced expeditioner who last November flew to Papua, an isolated island north of Australia.

There he met a tribe whose way of life has hardly changed in a thousand years. Their first documented contact with the Western world was in the 1970s.



Members of the Korowai tribe

“The Korowai are an indigenous group of hunter-gatherers who are perfectly in tune with their jungle environment and use all the natural materials around them to live,” said Dr Dryden, who also works in the Rare and Imported Pathogens Department at Public Health England, Porton Down.

“They live in longhouses and tree houses on stilts high in the jungle. They hunt and eat anything that moves from sago grubs to wild pig. They harvest jungle sago and grow banana and sweet potato.”



Dr Dryden I presume?

Dr Dryden was part of a 12-strong group of British and Australian friends, all experienced travellers. The trip was organised with the help of a leading Indonesian anthropologist and a friend in the British embassy in Jakarta.

“We took a big medical pack to cover most eventualities for us but also to offer any treatment we could to local people,” said Dr Dryden. “Wounds in the tropics get infected very early, so to use SurgihoneyRO™ as an early wound treatment was hugely helpful in preventing serious infection. We saw a lot of skin disease, tropical ulcers and infection in the local people.”

The group flew into Jayapura, the provincial capital of Papua and from there took a small plane over the central highlands to a riverside town called Dekai. Then they travelled by canoe to a village where a group of Korowai led them on a two-week trek into the depths of the lowland jungle and swamp to meet remote cousins still living a traditional lifestyle.

Hazards included crocodiles and parasitic diseases, such as malaria and filariasis, commonly known as elephantiasis, spread by blood-feeding black flies and mosquitos.

Dr Dryden said: “I have been on many expeditions and this was a tough one because of the very hot, humid climate and rough terrain, four to six hours walking a day through thick jungle vegetation, wading in swamps and rivers and being bitten (despite insect repellent) by every small creature – leeches, midges, horseflies, ants and even scorpions.”

However, he was fascinated to see the tribe’s self-sustainable, traditional lifestyle.

Dr Dryden said: "I was so impressed by how the Korowai are entirely reliant on their environment and so effective in using what is around them to run their lives. It was a great to experience the skills that people use in a hunter-gatherer society using stone age technology."



The Korowai hunting with bows & arrows