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Address for correspondence: Hilary Ranson, Vector Group, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, Pembroke Place, Liverpool L3 5QA, UK; email: hranson@liverpool.ac.uk

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etymologia

Anopheles

[ə-nof'ə-lēz]

From the Greek *an* (“not”) + *ophelos* (“benefit”), a genus of mosquitoes, many species of which are vectors of malaria. *Anopheles* was first described by German entomologist Johann Wilhelm Meigen in 1818. Although some sources translate *Anopheles* as “harmful,” it would be decades before Ronald Ross showed in 1897 that these mosquitoes transmit malaria parasites, and Meigen was most likely using *Anopheles* in a more literal interpretation as “useless.” That said, the connotation of “harmful” was prophetic in describing a mosquito that, even today, is indirectly responsible for ≈1 million deaths per year.

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Address for correspondence: Ronnie Henry, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1600 Clifton Rd NE, Mailstop E03, Atlanta, GA 30333, USA; email: boq3@cdc.gov

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