



**Bendigo Advertiser**

**17/06/2008**

Page: 11

General News

Region: Bendigo VIC

Circulation: 14582

Type: Regional

Size: 92.04 sq.cms

MTWTFSS-

# Malaria strain hides fatal secret

**A** STRAIN of malaria thought to be relatively harmless is just as deadly as the infamous type, Australian researchers have discovered.

Malaria kills one child every 30 seconds, most of them in Africa with a strain called *P. falciparum*, commonly believed to be the most virulent and deadly type of the illness.

But work by a team at the Menzies School of Health Research in Darwin has revealed the other major strain, called *P. vivax*, thought to be benign, is potentially fatal, too.

This strain is responsible for up to 400 million cases of malaria each year and is active in Asia, where it causes almost half the incidents of illness.

The parasite is also causing major problems in Indonesia and Papua New Guinea due to drug resistance, and more than 300 cases are reported each year in Australia among travellers returning from endemic countries.

Research conducted in Indonesia has shown that *P. vivax* is far from benign, but is responsible for a significant amount of illness with high rates of severe disease and death.

And in many cases, victims are infected with a mixture of both parasites, resulting in an even higher risk of severe disease than infection with a single parasite.

“Our findings show that in a region where multi drug-resistant strains of malaria are common, *P. vivax* infection is associated with severe and fatal malaria, particularly in young children,” researcher Dr Ric Price said.

The implications of the findings will be far reaching, he said.

Dr Price called for more research in other countries to confirm the findings. — AAP