



West Australian
17/06/2008
Page: 11
General News
Region: Perth
Circulation: 203328
Type: Capital City Daily
Size: 85.16 sq.cms
MTWTFS-

'Benign' type of malaria found to be deadly too

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 a team at the Menzies School of Health Research in Darwin has found the other major strain — *P. vivax* — thought to be benign, is potentially fatal too and is responsible for up to 400 million cases of malaria each year.

It 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 — more than 300 cases are reported each year in Australia among travellers returning from endemic countries.

Research conducted in Papua, 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.

In many cases, victims are infected with both parasites, resulting in an even higher risk of severe disease.

“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 Ric Price said.