

## Scientists discover chink in malaria mosquitoes

Malaria infects more than 400 million people worldwide, claiming more than a million lives, most of them children, every year. Now scientists have identified a chink in the life-cycle of a particular mosquito species that causes the infection, potentially opening the way for more effective treatment.

The malaria parasite grows inside red blood cells (RBCs), but to survive and cause illness it must transport hundreds of different proteins to the outside.

While these proteins have many different functions that are crucial to parasite growth and survival, a common feature is that they must all pass through the same pore in the surrounding membrane.

The scientists have now discovered the identity of this protein pore. The main significance of this finding is its implication for a new anti-malarial therapy.

The research has been undertaken by the Burnet Institute and the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute for Medical Research and Deakin University's new Medical School in Australia, said a Deakin release.

Tania de Koning-Ward, Deakin Medical School researcher, who led the study, said the discovery opened up a new way to combat this disease.

'The next step is to identify drugs that block this protein channel. Since it is completely unique to malaria parasites this is a realistic possibility,' she said.

These findings were published in Nature.

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