

Drug-resistant malaria strain new challenge in global fight

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London: British scientists on Thursday said that drug-resistant malaria parasites have spread to critical border regions of southeast Asia seriously threatening global efforts to control the disease. The study confirms that resistance to the best-known and most-used anti-malarial drug Artemisinin is growing in Southeast Asia.

The study analyzed blood samples from 1241 Malaria patients in 10 countries across Asia and Africa and found that Artemisinin resistance in *Plasmodium falciparum* — the most deadly form of malaria-causing parasite — was firmly established in western and northern Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam along with eastern Myanmar.

The study suggests that extending the course of anti-malarial treatment in areas with established resistance — for six days rather than the standard three days — could offer a temporary solution to this worsening problem. "It may still be possible to prevent the spread of Artemisinin-resistant malaria parasites across Asia and then to Africa by eliminating them but that window of opportunity is closing fast. Conventional malaria control approaches won't be enough — we will need to take more radical action and make this a global public health priority, without delay," Nicholas White, chairman of the Mahidol Oxford Tropical Medicine Research Unit, said.

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