

A novel oral treatment for leishmaniasis has potential to save thousands of lives

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A tropically stable liquid therapy for leishmaniasis, a disease known as the Baghdad boil, shows a significant decrease in infection after less than a week of treatment. This research is being presented at the 2011 American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists (AAPS) Annual Meeting and Exposition in Washington, D.C., Oct. 23 – 27.

Leishmaniasis is transmitted by the bite of sand flies. This [disease](#) threatens about 350 million people in 88 countries around the world, according to the World Health Organization. As many as 12 million people are infected, with an estimated 1 to 2 million new cases developing every year. Visceral leishmaniasis is the most severe form of the disease and is usually fatal without treatment.

Lead researcher Kishor Wasan, R.Ph., Ph.D., and his colleagues from the University of British Columbia in Canada have developed a tropically stable oral therapy using a well-established antibiotic for the treatment of visceral leishmaniasis.

Results showed that there was a 96 percent reduction in the parasitic infection after less than five days of treatment. This is the first formulation that is stable in the tropics and subtropics, including the Middle East, where many cases of leishmaniasis are seen.

"There are no other tropically stable oral treatments for visceral leishmaniasis," said Wasan. "We see a tremendous global health impact for this neglected disease, and being able to get treatment directly to

those infected, no matter how remote, is critical."

This non-invasive liquid therapy appears to help the intestinal absorption of the antibiotic and increases its access into the brain and heart. It is also less toxic than the current IV treatment.

U.S. military stationed in these locations are returning home infected with the disease, and it is also a concern for travelers. Current [treatment](#) is through an IV for more than a month and while effective, it is expensive and cannot be administered outside of a medical setting.

Provided by American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists

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