

Viruses common complication in malaria patients

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Scientists at the University of Liverpool have shown that viral brain infections may be a more important killer in African children than was previously thought.

The team, in collaboration with the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine and scientists from the College of Medicine, Malawi, looked at the role of viral infections in children that presented in a coma, and found that more than one quarter of patients had a virus infecting their

brain.

Malaria parasites in the blood

The study included children who also had malaria parasites in the blood, and whose coma would otherwise have been attributed to these parasites.

Professor Tom Solomon, from the Institute of Infection and Global Health, said: "We have known for a long time that finding malaria parasites in the blood of a sick child does not always mean the parasite is the cause.

"Many children living in villages in Malawi have blood full of parasites, apparently doing little harm, but ours is the first study to really look carefully for viral brain infections"

"We found that 32% of children with [central nervous system](#) infections had the [malaria parasite](#), 21% of which died. We detected 12 different viruses, such as [rabies](#), [mumps](#), and human herpes, but significantly it was those with dual infection that went on to develop more severe symptoms, such as seizures."

The study showed that children who had both malaria parasites in the blood and a virus in the brain tended to be the most severely affected, and most likely to die.

Consider how pathogens interact

This means that scientists have to look more carefully at children infected with the disease in future, taking into consideration how two different pathogens interact to cause more severe disease.

More information: [download.thelancet.com/flatcon ...
langlo_september.mp3](https://www.thelancet.com/flatcon...langlo_september.mp3)

Provided by University of Liverpool

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