

On the track of the deadly parasite Leishmania

May 14 2014

Leishmaniasis is one of the most underreported and insufficiently monitored diseases in the world. According to the WHO more than 300.000 people are infected annually with the most severe form of this disease - kala-azar. The treatment against this forgotten disease becomes increasingly difficult, and sometimes impossible as the parasites developed resistance against the existing drugs. Now scientists from Europe, India and Nepal have joined forces within the European Research Project Kaladrug-R to regain control against this disease and develop new effective clinical tools.

Leishmaniasis is one of the most underreported and insufficiently monitored diseases in the world affecting mainly the poorest and most disadvantaged people on the Indian Subcontinent, Latin America and East Africa. The disease is caused by tiny [parasites](#), the Leishmania, and transmitted by the bite of an infected sandfly.

Scientists at the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Antwerp, Belgium, are investigating why more and more Leishmania parasites develop resistance against existing drugs. Within the European Research Project Kaladrug-R partners from Europe, India and Nepal are developing simple clinical tools with the aim to use them in the high-risk areas on the Indian Subcontinent. This way, the scientists in India will be able to monitor the effectiveness of the drugs, and the degree of infection, and therefore the spread of drug resistance.

In its most severe form – the visceral Leishmaniasis called kala-azar – the

parasites seize the internal organs, and without treatment it will lead to death. That is why this form of the disease is stated to be the second largest parasitic killer after malaria. The World Health Organisation (WHO) is reporting 300,000 new cases annually.

As the drug-resistant parasites become more widespread, the treatment against this forgotten disease becomes increasingly difficult, and sometimes impossible. Now, only the protection against the bites of sandflies and new innovative research could help to regain control against this deadly disease.

Provided by Youris.com

Citation: On the track of the deadly parasite Leishmania (2014, May 14) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-05-track-deadly-parasite-leishmania.html>

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