

Headline	Chimp link to malaria in humans found	Language	English
Date	09 Aug 2009	Page No	44
MediaTitle	New Sunday Times	Article Size	102 cm²
Section	Focus	Color	Black/white
Journalist	N/A	PRValue	4,237
Frequency	Weekly		
ADValue	1,412		



Chimp link to malaria in humans found

MALARIA may have jumped to humans from chimpanzees much as AIDS did, US researchers reported in a study they hope could help in developing a vaccine against the infection.

Genetic analysis suggests the human parasite responsible for the disease is a direct descendant of the chimp parasite, they reported in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

The malaria-causing parasite *Plasmodium falciparum* may have been transmitted to human as recently as 10,000 years ago, Francisco Ayala of the University of California Irvine and colleagues said.

"The disease in humans has become resistant to many drugs. It's my hope that our discovery will bring us closer to making a vaccine," Ayala said.

More than 300 million people get malaria every year and kills an estimated 1 million, mostly children, according to the World Health Organisation.

Ayala's team took blood samples from 94 chimpanzees in Cameroon and Ivory Coast to find the apes' version of the parasite.

"The closest known relative of *P. falciparum* is a chimpanzee parasite, *Plasmodium reichenowi*," they wrote. They found eight samples of *P. reichenowi*.

Genetic analysis of the samples showed all known *P. falciparum* parasites originated from *P. reichenowi*.

Researchers are trying to make a vaccine against malaria but are having difficulty. Understanding how it became adapted to humans could help in this work.

The finding is the latest to show that some of humanity's worst diseases originated in animals. AIDS came from chimpanzees. Influenza A H1N1, H5N1 avian influenza are believed to have originated in animals. — Reuters