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HEALTH / SCIENCE

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'Haldi' to take the sting out of malaria

Kounteya Sinha
[17 Dec, 2006 2300hrs IST TIMES NEWS NETWORK]

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NEW DELHI: They are known to have anti-oxidant, anti-infectious and anti-inflammatory properties.

Now, curcumin, the active ingredient of turmeric (haldi) "that has proved effective in lowering cholesterol, glucose and combating cancer" will join in India's fight against malaria.

Top scientists from the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, and National Institute of Malarial Research, Delhi, are embarking on human trials to see the effectiveness of a combination therapy that uses curcumin with artemisinin derivative artesunate, the most potent compound against malaria.

Studies on mice have shown this new combination therapy to be highly effective. The Rs 1 crore human phase II trials, being funded by the Department of Biotechnology, will take place in four centres "IIS, Institute of Life Sciences, Bhubaneswar, NIMR and ISPAT General Hospital, Rourkela.

A team of scientists is meeting in Rourkela on December 23 to finalise the size, duration and protocols of the study. The trial is expected to begin next month.

According to an IIS study, the combination will prove superior from several perspectives. Both are from natural sources and no resistance is known to curcumin.

Artemisinin runs the risk of resistance development when used widely as monotherapy while curcumin can be tolerated at very high doses, as much as 8 g/day. This will decrease the dose of artemisinin and lower the cost of therapy.

Each year, between 300 and 500 million people become infected with malaria in Africa and Asia.



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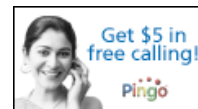
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