

Beating malaria could be a matter of timing

By **Kirsteen Paterson**

JET lag can be a matter of life and death, malaria experts claimed yesterday.

A study found the parasite that causes the potentially fatal illness is unable to cope with a shift in its body clock.

The chances of causing infection are cut in half if the parasite fails to chime in with its host's daily routine.

Dr Sarah Reece, of Edinburgh University, said the findings could help scientists tackle the disease more effectively.

Internal body clocks govern key functions including sleep cycles, blood pressure and physical strength.

Researchers monitored two groups of mice, one of which was awake during the day and one active at night. They discovered the malaria parasite was half as effective at causing infection in animals with a daily routine different to its own.

Dr Reece said: 'We effectively gave the parasites jet lag. Our findings suggest they have developed some clever tricks to get their timing right and cause infection. This is rare evidence that organisms whose body clock is in sync with their environment have a better chance of survival.'

Their study was funded by the Wellcome Trust and the Royal Society.

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