

## News Item

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### BMJ Award News

#### **RECTALARTESUNATE STUDY WINS BMJ RESEARCH PAPER OF YEAR AWARD**

Malaria currently claims the life of one African child nearly every 30 seconds. In many parts of Africa and Asia, travel is difficult if not dangerous or impossible for the very ill, as transport is rarely available in the evening. A few hours' delay can mean the difference between life and death for those with severe malaria. For patients that survive, this can still mean living with permanent neurological damage. Previous studies demonstrated that an artesunate suppository was effective in killing parasites in patients brought to hospital, and that it was superior to quinine. A study conducted by A WHO/TDR showed that for patients who came too late for treatment and for those able to get to a clinic quickly, rectal artesunate could not help much. But for patients who could not get to a clinic within six hours after treatment (half of whom could not get to a clinic within 15 hours), pre-referral rectal artesunate halved the risk of death or permanent disability.

This article published in The Lancet in February 2009, was chosen as the British Medical Journal's research paper of the year. The award, announced March 10, recognizes

original clinical research that contributes significantly to improving health and health care.

Professor Dr. Md. Abul Faiz led the trial in Bangladesh. A pioneer in the field of research in Bangladesh, is currently professor of medicine, and former director-general of the Health Services. Along with him, Professor Dr. Ridwanur Rahman was also an integral part of this work.

John Gyapong led the research in Ghana whereas Marian Warsame, led the trial in the United Republic of Tanzania, with support from Andrew Kitua, former NIMR director-general.

"Huge credit must also go to the thinking that led to this work – from Peter Folb, Nicholas White and Richard Peto – who supported the concept and contributed to the strategy, design and analyses," Gomes said.

"This goes beyond just winning an award" said TDR scientist Melba Gomes, the trial director. "It's about using scientific endeavour to transform simple ideas into practical solutions. It's also about demonstrating that simple ideas can have an important impact on public health."

*Source: TDR news item*