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Malaria gametocytogenesis

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Abstract

Male and female gametocytes are the components of the malaria parasite life cycle which are taken up from an infected host bloodstream by mosquitoes and thus mediate disease transmission. These gamete precursors are morphologically and functionally quite distinct from their asexual blood stage counterparts and this is reflected in their distinct patterns of gene expression, cellular development and metabolism. Recent transcriptome, proteome and reverse genetic studies have added valuable information to that obtained from traditional studies. However, we still have no answer to the fundamental question regarding sexual development: 'what triggers gametocytogenesis'? In the current climate of eradication/elimination, tackling transmission by killing gametocytes has an important place on the agenda because most antimalarial drugs, whilst killing asexual blood stage parasites, have no effect on the transmissible stages.

Keywords: malaria, gametocytogenesis, gametocytes, sexual development, Plasmodium, mosquito-borne transmission

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