

## Malaria: Parasite Species Found in Chimps Is Similar to Deadly Version in Humans

(8/6/2552)



Researchers in Gabon and France have discovered a new species of [malaria](#) parasite, one that lives in chimpanzees but is closely related to the species most deadly to humans.

The [new species was described](#) last week in the journal PLoS Pathogens.

It was named *Plasmodium gaboni*, and it is closely related to *Plasmodium falciparum*, which causes more than a million deaths each year, most of them of children in Africa.

In its search for malaria in apes, researchers from the Research Institute for Development in Montpellier, France, and the International Center of Medical Research in Franceville, Gabon, took blood from 17 chimpanzees captured by Gabonese hunters; 2 of them had the new parasite. In Central Africa, baby chimps may be kept or sold as pets after their parents are shot for meat.

Only one other species resembling *falciparum* malaria, called *Plasmodium reichenowi*, has been found in apes, so this discovery will help experts studying DNA work out how malaria evolved in apes, humans and, presumably, in their common ancestor.

But the authors said that “the risk of this transfer to humans must be seriously considered,” for three reasons: because both the Ebola virus and the [AIDS](#) virus have moved from apes to humans; because another common malaria, *Plasmodium knowlesi*, recently jumped from macaque monkeys to humans in southeast Asia; and because these infected chimpanzees lived in villages as pets.

Source: [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/02/health/02glob.html?\\_r=1&scp=2&sq=malaria&st=cse](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/02/health/02glob.html?_r=1&scp=2&sq=malaria&st=cse)