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MALARIA DECLINING DESPITE CLIMATE CHANGE

New research published today in the online scientific journal *PLoS ONE* has found that the number of malaria cases in the East African highlands has dropped dramatically, despite a surge a decade ago that some researchers linked to climate change.

Lead author Professor David Stern from the Crawford School of Economics and Government at The Australian National University worked with a team of researchers based at Oxford University and in Kenya to analyse trends in mean temperature and malaria cases across the region.

He said there had been considerable controversy on whether climate change was occurring in East Africa and what the effects were on the incidence of malaria.

“In research we published in 2002 in *Nature* we could not find a statistically significant trend in temperatures in the region, sparking heated debate about what caused the increase in malaria in the area at the time,” Professor Stern said.

“This new research applies recently developed statistical tests to a quality controlled temperature series from Kericho in East Africa, and when the last 15 years of data are included, we can see a statistically significant trend.

“But the number of malaria cases admitted to the local hospital has dropped significantly in the last ten years with surveys in the area showing declines in the prevalence of the malaria parasite, mirroring a global decline in the disease.

“This research suggests that, while climate change is expected to have many serious impacts, other factors including medical interventions appear to be more important in determining the incidence of malaria.”

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