

Publication

An investigation into febrile illnesses of unknown aetiology in Wipim, Papua New Guinea

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In Papua New Guinea the aetiology of febrile illnesses remains poorly characterized, mostly due to poor diagnostic facilities and the inaccessibility of much of the rural areas of the country. We investigated the aetiological agents of febrile illnesses for 136 people presenting to Wipim Health Centre in Western Province, Papua New Guinea. Arboviral and rickettsial real-time polymerase chain reaction (PCR) assays, malaria blood smears and a malaria PCR test were used to identify pathogens associated with a history of fever. In 13% (n = 18) of cases an aetiological agent was identified. Dengue virus type 1 was detected in 11% (n = 15) of the samples tested and malaria in 2% (n = 3). None of the other arboviral or rickettsial pathogens tested for were detected in any of the samples. Although dengue viruses have been identified in Papua New Guinea using serological methods, this study represents the first direct detection of dengue in the country. The detection of malaria, on the other hand, was surprisingly low considering the previous notion that this was a hyperendemic region of Papua New Guinea.

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