

Natural Products and Tropical Diseases

Authors

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Tropical diseases encompass all diseases that occur solely, or principally, in the tropics. In practice, the term is often taken to refer to infectious diseases that thrive in hot, humid conditions, such as malaria, leishmaniasis, schistosomiasis, onchocerciasis, lymphatic filariasis, Chagas disease, African trypanosomiasis, and dengue. Neglected tropical diseases affect about 1 billion people, primarily poor populations living in tropical and subtropical climates, and in 2008, malaria caused nearly one million deaths, mostly among African children (WHO, 2011)*. There is an urgent need to discover new treatments against these ailments or to kill their vectors because of the development of resistance and/or the side effects or costs of available treatments. Furthermore, as people suffering from these diseases are often from developing countries and have low incomes, the economical interest is not high for the research and development of new molecules. Therefore, most people still rely on traditional

medicine for their prevention or treatment. As plants are a recognized source of new medicines with great potential, *Planta Medica* has decided to publish a special issue on natural products and tropical diseases to report advances in this area. Reviews compiled in this special issue deal with different aspects of prevention and treatment of tropical diseases as well as tests and targets for the discovery of such compounds from nature. They also include overviews of effective extracts, fractions, or isolated compounds from plants or marine sources, or improved traditional phyto-medicines used against well-known diseases as malaria and others as Buruli ulcer.

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* World Health Organisation (WHO), 2011. http://www.who.int/topics/tropical_diseases/en/