Harvard scientists discover bacteria that fight malaria

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis.

Harvard scientists have made a discovery that could lead the way to a new strategy for preventing malaria. Researchers led by Flaminia Catteruccia, associate professor of immunology and infectious diseases, have found that a type of bacteria, *Wolbachia*, naturally infect mosquitoes in West Africa and prevent them from transmitting malaria.

For this study, they returned to the village in Burkina Faso where they first found the infected population, in order to study whether the infection could really prevent the mosquitoes from carrying the *Plasmodium* parasites that cause malaria.

The result was striking: of the 221 mosquitoes Catteruccia's team collected, only one was infected with both *Wolbachia* and *Plasmodium*. "These data," Catteruccia said, "suggest that in this village, *Wolbachia* is having a negative effect on malaria transmission, so it is already acting as a sort of anti-malarial agent."

Catteruccia hopes that further study in the lab can help scientists overcome this problem: "We're also adapting this bacterium to lab mosquito populations," she said, "so that we can study…and also possibly modify the behavior of this bacterium…."

Read full, original post: Bacteria That Fight Malaria