

Tulane researchers call for eliminating malaria in Haiti and the Dominican Republic

April 27, 2010 11:30 AM Arthur Nead

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In an editorial in the May 2010 issue of the prestigious journal *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*, Tulane University malaria researchers urge action to eliminate malaria from Hispaniola, the last island in the Caribbean where the disease occurs regularly.

On Hispaniola, home to the nations of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, malaria is caused by a single mosquito-borne parasite, *Plasmodium falciparum*.

The authors say success in eliminating malaria from Hispaniola would demonstrate that it is possible to defeat malaria in other regions of the world where it remains a dire threat. There is also evidence in Haiti that the parasite is becoming resistant to chloroquine, an inexpensive treatment for the disease. Eliminating malaria now would save these impoverished nations from having to resort to more expensive drug therapies.

The authors advise that Haiti and the Dominican Republic should advance from basic mosquito control to more intensive methods. "Key to the successful elimination of malaria on the island will be the strategic use of combinations of methods," say the authors. "Malaria elimination will require that every suspected case on the island be diagnosed and treated."

The authors recommend developing a system for quickly locating and diagnosing new cases; using control methods including insecticide-treated nets and spraying to prevent the spread of malaria; and educating the community to seek treatment for all fevers and support the elimination effort.

Success will require the "unwavering political will" of both governments on the island, and will "set a precedent for health diplomacy," say the authors.

The authors, all from the Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, are Joseph Keating, assistant professor of International Health and

Development; Thomas Eisele, assistant professor of International Health and Development; and Donald Krogstad, professor of Tropical Medicine.