

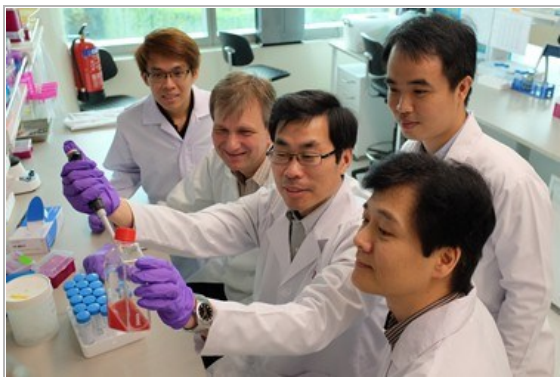
Updated: 01/24/2014 00:51

First of its kind "humanised mouse" built to study malaria

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Scientists have been trying to find a vaccine for the mosquito-borne disease, malaria, for the past 40 years.

And a group Singapore scientists, believe their work in developing a first of its kind humanised mice has brought researchers one step closer to that goal.

The researchers from the Singapore-MIT Alliance for Research and Technology say not only does the mice have a human immune system, they also carry human red blood cells.

Lead scientist Professor Chen Jianzhu says these humanised mice will allow researcher to understand better how our body reacts to the malaria parasites and

also test the efficacy of malaria vaccines.

"Let's take a vaccine as example. In order to find out a vaccine works or not, one way is that you deliberately challenge the mouse with the parasite. As you can imagine, this is much harder to do in humans. To deliberately challenge the human and infect the human with the malaria parasite. But in the humanised mouse, we can directly challenge them to see if their immunisation can protect the infection or not."

The scientists are confident that a malaria vaccine could be found in 10 years' time.

While there's currently no viable malaria vaccine, there are anti-malarial drugs and preventive treatment.

But they're losing their effectiveness as the resistance to such drugs grows.

Malaria affects some 60 million people worldwide.