

RELAPSING MALARIA IN AN 18-YEAR-OLD ROHINGYA REFUGEE, A THREAT TO MALARIA ELIMINATION

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION: Plasmodium vivax is the main cause of relapsing malaria and is much more difficult than Plasmodium falciparum to eliminate. There is a higher chance of relapse in patients without directly observed therapy (DOT) compared to patients with DOT. OBJECTIVE: The purpose of this case report is to determine the ways to improve control and prevention of malaria. CASE PRESENTATION: An 18-year-old Rohingya refugee arrived in Segamat on 1 January 2024 after traveling for 22 days from Cox'bazar, Bangladesh crossing the jungle. He started to have a fever, chill and rigor on 27 December 2023 and was diagnosed with malaria (Plasmodium vivax) on 16 January 24 in Segamat. He received treatment in Hospital Segamat for five days and was discharged with oral Primaquine for another nine days without DOT. His compliance with medication was a question. During follow-up, Blood Films for Malaria Parasite (BFMP) turned out to be positive in the third month on 17 April 2024. He was then admitted again to the hospital for treatment of relapsing malaria. He was discharged well and is currently on monthly follow-up with BFMP. His three housemates were screened and the BMFP results were negative. The entomological investigation was done, and the vector density was low. Long Lasting Insecticidal Nets (LLIN) were supplied to him and his housemates. CONCLUSION: In Malaysia, refugees can access public and private healthcare facilities, this is often hindered by a variety of factors including the cost of treatment, fear of moving in public to access those services, and language barriers. The Ministry of Health (MOH) could collaborate with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to screen the refugees as MOH provides free BMFP tests to the foreigners as well. DOT is recommended to prevent relapsing malaria, especially for patients infected by Plasmodium vivax.

Keywords: Relapsing Malaria, Refugee, Control and Prevention, Directly Observed Therapy
