Prevalence of severe chloroquine resistance associates the point mutation in pfcrt and pfmdr1 gene in eastern India

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 11 September 2011
Received in revised form 8 October 2011
Accepted 28 October 2011
Available online 28 December 2011

Keywords:
Plasmodium falciparum
Chloroquine resistance
pfmdr1
pfcrt
Point mutation

1. Introduction

Malaria is a devastating infection caused by protozoa of the genus Plasmodium. Drug resistant is widespread. No new chemical class of anti-malarial drug has been introduced into clinical practice since 1996, and there is a recent rise of parasite strains with reduced sensitivity to the newest drugs. With approximately 243 million cases and 863,000 attributed deaths reported globally in 2009[1], malaria is one of the most severe infectious diseases; primarily affecting the world’s most disadvantaged populations. Of the four typically recognized Plasmodium species causing disease in humans, Plasmodium falciparum (P. falciparum) causes most mortality, mainly in children below the age of 5, additionally representing a reservoir of latent infection that hampers current control and future elimination efforts[2]. No new class of antimalarials has been introduced into clinical practice since 1996[3], owing to the intrinsic difficulties in discovering and developing new antimicrobials, as well as a relative lack of public and private resource commitment towards antimalarial research. Moreover, treatment of malaria is becoming problematical due to resistance in P. falciparum to the commonly used drug, chloroquine. Thus there is an urgent need to diagnose the chloroquine resistant pattern.

The clinical outcome of malaria infection depends on parasite factor (drug resistance, multiplication rate, cytoadherence, rosetting, and antigenic polymorphism), host factors (immunity, pro-inflammatory cytokines, genetics, and age), geographic and social factors. The most important factor is the emergence of drug resistant malaria in endemic areas. Early detection of drug [commonly used chloroquine, sulfadoxine–pyrimethamine (SA–PY)] resistant and virulent form of parasite is very much important for therapy. Generally such decision making relies on clinical studies, supported by in–vito sensitive testing. In this situation molecular analysis of parasite genes essential for assessing resistance to the chloroquine (crt gene and MDR
gene) classes of drugs are very much appropriate. It is now known that chloroquine (4-aminoquinoline) resistant in vitro and in vivo is associated with point mutations in P. falciparum multidrug resistance gene 1 (pfmdr1) and P. falciparum chloroquine resistance transporter gene (pfcr), a putative transporter that modulates intra-parasitic drug concentrations[4-9]. Sometimes chloroquine resistance is likely to be a consequence of multi-factors and enzymes in glutathione (GSH) system[8].

The prevalence of multi drug resistant malaria is now reaching alarming levels in India, increasing the need for regular monitoring of drug resistance and changes in drug prophylactics[6]. The pfcr gene, which encodes a transmembrane protein located in the P. falciparum digestive vacuole, was recently characterized[7]. A perfect correlation was found between in vitro response to chloroquine and sequence polymorphism at the pfcr locus[4,7]. In particular, in vitro chloroquine resistance was associated with the substitution of lysine for threonine at position 76 in field isolates and laboratory strains. In addition, haplotypes with specific combinations of mutations showed a specific geographical distribution, with distinct haplotypes in Malawian African and Asian isolates compared to South American isolates, suggesting that pfcr polymorphism is a useful tool for the public health surveillance of chloroquine resistance[4,7-9]. In our present study, we want to investigate the genetic diversity in pfcr and pfmdr1 gene to find out the resistant pattern of the P. falciparum clinical isolates in eastern India.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Chemicals and reagents

Phenol, chloroform, Isoamyl alcohol, gentamycin, folate, agarose, p-amino benzoic acid–free RPMI 1640, HEPES, cell culture grade DMSO were purchased from Himedia, India. Tris–HCl, Tris buffer, potassium dihydrogen phosphate (KH2PO4), dipotassium hydrogen phosphate (K2HPO4), Tris-HCl, Tris buffer, potassium dihydrogen phosphate (KH2PO4), ethylene diamine tetra acetate (EDTA), sodium dodecyl sulfate (SDS), sodium hydroxide (NaOH), sodium bicarbonate (NaHCO3), sodium acetate, ammonium acetate, isopropanol, ethanol, boric acid were procured from Merck Ltd., SRL Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai, India. Albumax-II, hypoxanthine, proteinase K, RNase A, ethidium bromide, chloroquine phosphate were purchased from Sigma Chemical Co., USA. Oligonucleotide primers, restriction enzymes were purchased from New England Biolab, Baverly, USA. PCR grade nucleotide mixture, MgCl2, dNTPs and Taq DNA polymerase were purchased from Roche applied science, USA. pLDH kit was purchased from Diatek, Kolkata, and Purulia. All other chemicals were from Merck Ltd., SRL Pvt., Ltd., Mumbai and were of the highest grade available.

2.2. Selection of subjects

Inclusion criteria for this experiment includes fever at consultation or history of fever within the past 24 h, a mono infection with P. falciparum based on the microscopic examination of Giemsa-stained thin and thick blood smears, a parasite density of 40–40000 μL of blood, and no recent history of self-medication with antimalarial drugs. Patients with signs and symptoms of severe and complicated malaria, as defined by the World Health Organization, were excluded (WHO, 2003).

2.3. Collection of sample

The study was carried out from May 2008 to January 2010. Respectively One hundred thirty two and forty seven clinical isolates of P. falciparum were enrolled in this study from the Kolkata, and Primary Health Center, Purulia, two malaria endemic zone of West Bengal, India. Informed consent was obtained from the respective patient and the patient’s guardian both in case of adult and child patients. The experimental protocol of this study was followed the World Health Organization (WHO) and duly approved by the Institutional Ethical Committee.

2.4. Transport of sample

After collection of the sample from Kolkata, and Purulia of West Bengal, samples are transported to the laboratory as early as possible to carry out the different experiments.

2.5. Separation of red blood cell (RBC)

5–10 mL of venous blood samples were collected in a vacutainer (BD falcon) coated with an anticoagulant (EDTA) and washed in folate and p-amino benzoic acid–free RPMI 1640 medium for several times; followed by centrifugation at 2000 × g for 10 min at 4 °C, an aliquot of 1.5–2 mL of the RBC pellet was obtained[10].

2.6. In vitro drug sensitivity assay

In vitro drug sensitivity assays were performed on the clinical isolates with prior adaptation to the in vitro culture conditions[11]. Infected erythrocytes were suspended in the complete folate and p-amino benzoic acid free RPMI 1640 medium consisting of 0.5% Albumax II, 25 mM HEPES, 25 mM NaHCO3, 25 μg/mL gentamycin and 0.2% hypoxanthine at a hematocrit of 1.5% and an initial parasitemia of 0.2–1.0%. If the blood sample had a parasitemia >1.0%, fresh uninfected, type O erythrocytes were added to adjust the parasitemia to 0.6% to 1% and cultured at 37 °C in 5% CO2.

2.7. IC50 value

The 50% inhibitory concentration or IC50 value means the inhibition of growth up to 50%. Sterile RPMI 1640 were used to prepare stock solutions and dilutions of chloroquine. The final concentrations ranged from 1 to 1000 nM for chloroquine. Twenty five micro liters of each concentration were distributed in micro culture plate and IC50 was determined using microscopic examination, detection of pLDH and hypoxanthine uptake assay[10]. The calculation
was based on non linear regression analysis of the logarithm of concentrations plotted against the percentage growth inhibition. Isolates were defined as susceptible to chloroquine when IC₅₀ values were <60 nM, intermediate susceptible when 60–100 nM and resistant when >100 nM.

2.8. Isolation of parasitic DNA

Erythrocytes (infected and uninfected) were suspended in 15 mL of ice-cold NET buffer (150 mM NaCl, 10 mM EDTA, 50 mM Tris, pH 7.5) and lysed with 0.015% saponin (Sigma). The lysate was centrifuged at 2000 x g for 10 min at 4 °C and the pellet was transferred to a 1.5-mL micro centrifuge tube and suspended in 500 μL of NET buffer. The mixture was treated with 1% N-lauroylsarcosine (Sigma) and RNase A (100 μg/mL) at 37 °C for 1 h and proteinase K (200 μg/mL) at 50 °C for 1 h. Parasite DNA was extracted three times in equilibrated phenol (pH = 8), phenol–chloroform–isoamyl alcohol (25:24:1), and chloroform–isoamyl alcohol (24:1) and precipitated by the addition of 3 M sodium acetate and cold absolute ethanol. The extracted DNA was air dried and re-suspended in TE buffer (10 mM Tris, 1 mM EDTA). Parasite DNA was stored at -20 °C until use[10].

2.9. Polymerase chain reaction

The regions of the pfcr and pfmdr1 genes surrounding the polymorphisms of interest were amplified by the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) using the Eppendorf thermal cycler under the following conditions: approximately 200 ng of genomic DNA, 15 pmol of primers, reaction buffer (10 mM Tris, 50 mM KCl, pH = 8.3), 2.5 mM MgCl₂, 250 μM dNTPs, and 1 unit of Taq DNA polymerase (Roche applied science) in a 25 μL reaction mixture at 95 °C for 5 min for the first cycle and 30 sec in subsequent cycles, 50 °C for 30 sec in all cycles, and 72 °C for 1 min in all cycles, for a total of 30 cycles. The primers were designed on the basis of the complete Plasmodium falciparum Dd2 strain sequence available in the genomic data bank. Five micro liters of the amplification product was loaded on a 1.2% agarose gel, subjected to electrophoresis, stained with ethidium bromide, and visualized under ultraviolet trans-illumination to confirm the presence of the particular DNA fragment according to bp size[12].

2.10. RFLP analysis of pfcr and pfmdr1 gene

Single nucleotide polymorphism of the pfcr and pfmdr1 genes at their specific codons was determined by enzymatic digestion of specific restriction enzymes. In pfcr gene Apol (New England Biolabs) enzyme digests the PCR products (10 μL) at 50 °C for one hour and identifies 76 lys which is wild type of allele.

Ten micro liters of amplification product was digested with the restriction enzyme ApHI (New England Biolabs) at 37 °C for one hour to detect the presence of asparagine amino acid at 86 codon of pfmdr1 gene. In pfmdr1 gene, digestion with EcoRV (New England Biolabs) at 37 °C for one hour to identify the tyrosine at 1246 codon.

15 μL of the restriction enzyme treated product was mixed with 2 μL of bromophenol blue and finally loaded on a 1.2 % agarose gel; subjected to electrophoresis and stained with ethidium bromide, and visualized under ultraviolet trans illuminator to confirm the presence of the particular DNA fragment according to bp size[12].

2.11. Statistical analysis

The data were expressed as Mean ± SEM. Fisher’s exact tests, Mann–Whitney U–tests were used to study the relation between IC₅₀ values and genotypes. The relation between in vitro phenotype with molecular genotypes was studied by Fisher’s exact tests and Spearman correlation tests. All the data analysis was performed using a statistical package, Origin 6.1, (Northampton, MA 01060 USA) and GraphPad InStat software 3.0.

3. Results

3.1. In vitro susceptibility to chloroquine

In vitro assay for chloroquine yield interpretable result on all 132 isolates from Kolkata and 47 isolates from Purulia respectively. Using the in vitro responses to chloroquine drug 57 (43.18%) isolates of Kolkata and 6 (12.76%) isolates from Purulia were chloroquine sensitive (geometric mean IC₅₀= 45 nM, range= 8–60 nM) (Figure 1). Out of 132 isolates from Kolkata, 15 (11.36%) and 6 (12.76%) isolates from Purulia were immediately susceptible to chloroquine (mean IC₅₀= 90 nM, range = 61–100 nM), 60 (45.45%) isolates were highly resistant to chloroquine (mean IC₅₀= 280.2 nM, range = 110–480 nM) in Kolkata, whereas 35 (74.66%) isolates from Purulia were also highly resistant.

3.2. pfcr and pfmdr1 genotypes

The region of pfcr and pfmdr1 genes flanking the polymorphism of interest were amplified by PCR (multiplex PCR), followed by digestion with specific restriction enzyme to detect each variant (Figure 2).
3.3. PCR/ RFLP – test for pfcrt gene

During the SNP analysis of pfcrt, amplification with the primer gives a 134 bp PCR product that run in 1.2% agarose gel and visualized under UV trans–illuminator. Now restriction fragment length polymorphism (RFLP) analysis of pfcrt gene has been done and the presence of the K76T mutation was detected using the Apol restriction enzyme. Apol cuts out 34 bp from the 134–bp pfcrt PCR product in wild-type alleles but does not cut the mutant allele (Figure 2a). The number of bp present in DNA fragments was detected, using Bio–Rad Quantity one (Version 4.6.7) software. From Table 1, the frequency of samples composed of pfcrt mutant is only 82 (62.12%) isolates, in Kolkata except these, all other 50 (37.88%) isolates contain wild type of allele. Here mixed alleles are taken as mutant one. While in Table 2, we found that most of isolates (87.23%) obtained from Purulia contain mutant pfcrt K76T allele.

![Figure 1](image)

Figure 1. Relationship between the phenotype determined by in vitro drug sensitivity assays and expressed as IC50 of chloroquine and the pfcrt and pfmdr1 genotype, defined by either the absence of mutations (wild-type) or presence of point mutations. The solid line (corresponding to 100 nM, highly resistant) hypothetically shows the severe resistance levels for in vitro chloroquine resistance.

3.4. PCR/ RFLP – test for pfmdr1 gene

Figure 2b and 2c shows the polymorphism in the pfmdr1 gene. Amplification with N86Y primer gives a PCR product 310 bp. The tyr variant of codon 86 are discriminated by AflIII enzyme. Restriction digest with AflIII results in two fragments of approximately 190 bp and 120 bp in mutant alleles (Lane 3 & 4). Wild-type alleles yield an uncut PCR fragment of 310 bp (Lane 2). Mixed isolate is also found here (Lane 5) where 310bp, 190bp and 120bp fragments were present (Figure 2b). The number of bp present in DNA fragments was detected by Bio–Rad Quantity one (Version 4.6.7) software. Out of 132 isolates from Kolkata only 40 (30.30%) isolates having mutant type 86 Y allele, whereas a large number 84 (63.64%) isolates having wild type of allele rest 8 (6.06%) are mixed allele (Table 1). In Table 2 it is observed that out 47 isolate from Purulia only 18 (38.30%) isolates having wild type N86 allele, rest 29 (61.70%) isolates are mutant alleles, of which 21 (44.68%) isolates are pure mutant allele and left 8 (17.02%) are mixed allele.

![Figure 2](image)

Figure 2. (a) RFLP analysis of pfcrt. Representative 1.2% agarose gel electrophoresis of the pfcrt K76T polymorphism. Lane 1 is 100 bp ladders, Presence of the K76T mutation was detected using the Apol restriction enzyme. Apol cuts out 34 bp from the 134–bp pfcrt PCR product in wild-type alleles (Lane 2) but does not cut the mutant allele (Lanes 3 and 4). A mixed isolate is shown in lane 5. The number of bp present in DNA fragments was detected using Bio–Rad Quantity one (Version 4.6.7) software.

(b) RFLP analysis of pfmdr1. Representative 1.2% agarose gel electrophoresis of the pfmdr1 N86Y polymorphism. Lane 1 is 100 bp ladders, Presence of the N86Y mutation was detected using the AflIII restriction enzyme digestion. Wild-type alleles yield an uncut PCR fragment of 310 bp (Lane 2). Restriction digest with AflIII results in two fragments of approximately 190 bp and 120 bp in mutant alleles (Lane 3 & 4). A mixed isolate is shown in Lane 5, where 310 bp, 190 bp and 120 bp fragments were found. The number of bp present in DNA fragments was detected by Bio–Rad Quantity one (Version 4.6.7) software.

(c) RFLP analysis of pfmdr1 D1246Y polymorphism. Lane 1 is 100 bp ladders. Presence of the D1246Y mutation was detected using the EcoRV restriction enzyme digestion. Wild-type alleles yield an uncut PCR fragment of 499 bp (Lane 2). Restriction digest with EcoRV results in two fragments of approximately 250 bp each in mutant alleles (Lane 3 & 4). A mixed isolate is shown in Lane 5, where 499 and 250bp fragments were found. The number of bp present in DNA fragments was detected in Bio–Rad Quantity one (Version 4.6.7) software.

Presence of the D1246Y mutation was detected using the EcoRV restriction enzyme digestion. Wild-type alleles yield an uncut PCR fragment of 499 bp (Lane 2). Restriction digest with EcoRV results in two fragments of approximately 250 bp each in mutant alleles (Lane 3 & 4). A mixed isolate is shown in Lane 5, where 499 and 250 bp fragments were found (Figure 2c). Only 33 (25%) isolates shows the mutant 1246Y allele, large number of (88 isolates, 66.66%) wild D1246 allele are also found. 11 (8.33%) isolates shows mixed type of allele in D1246Y codon in Kolkata (Table 1). Whereas 20 (42.55%) mutant 1246Y allele and 3 (6.38%) mixed D+Y1246 allele have been found in Purulia. Only 51.06% (24) isolate have been found with wild D1246 allele. Here all mixed type of allele is taken as mutant allele (Table 2).
In short, out of 132 samples of Kolkata region, 76T in pfcr gene, 86Y and 1246Y in pfmdrI gene mutation were present in 82 (62.12%), 48 (36.36%) and 44 (33.33%) isolates, that indicates the increasing pattern of pfmdrI mutation in this region. In addition, out of 47 samples of Purulia region, 76T in pfcr gene, 86Y and 1246Y in pfmdrI mutation were present in 41 (87.23%), 29 (61.70%) and 23 (48.93%) isolates, indicating the prevalence of both pfcr and pfmdrI mutation (Figure 3).

Single 76T mutation has been found predominantly in Kolkata region instead of Purulia, whereas wild type alleles (i.e. no mutation) more frequently found in Kolkata. Out of these 132 isolates from Kolkata double mutation (both pfcr and pfmdrI) were found in 43.93% isolates but most interestingly 76.6% cases of double mutation have been found in isolates from Purulia respectively. Out of this 76.6% cases of double mutation in Purulia, 29.79% cases have been found with mutation of K76T allele of pfcr gene and both N86Y and D1246Y allele of pfmdrI gene (Figure 4).

The presence of pfcr and pfmdrI point mutations was linked to in vitro resistance to chloroquine.

The phenotype of in vitro susceptibility to chloroquine was associated with pfcr genotype at positions 76, and also with pfmdrI genotypes at positions 86, but not with 1246 (Fisher’s exact test, chloroquine, P < 0.05 for codons 76 and 86; and P was not significant at the level of 0.05 for 1246 codon) (Table 3), but most interestingly double mutation with 76T + 86Y was found in 29 isolates and triple
mutation with 76T + 86Y + 1246Y was found in 46 isolates. Out of these 29 and 46 isolates, 26 (89.65%) and 44 (95.65%) isolates respectively were severe in vitro chloroquine resistance. Figure 5 shows that low IC_{50} values were associated with wild pfcrt genotypes more specifically in K76 allele. Single mutation with 1246Y also possesses very low IC_{50} value. Mutation with single 76T allele and 86Y allele possess high (border line resistant) IC_{50} values, Whereas double mutation associated with 76T + 86Y and triple mutation with 76T + 86Y +1246Y having very high IC_{50} value for chloroquine and also resistant to chloroquine (Fisher’s exact test, P<0.001) Whereas no such relation was observed with double mutation with 76T+1246Y and 86Y+1246Y.

Table 3 shows the different genotypes of all isolates with complete genotyping in relation to in vitro results. As mixed and mutant genotypes showed similar in vitro phenotypes, mixed genotypes were considered as mutant for this analysis

4. Discussion

The emergence of drug resistant malaria is a serious problem in tropical countries and an early detection is very important for providing proper medical treatment. Recently molecular genotyping of parasites has been proved an useful tool in assessing drug resistant in P. falciparum malaria particularly the point mutations in pfcrt (chloroquine resistance transporter) gene and pfmdr1 (multidrug resistant) gene are studied to circumvent the problem. The identification and validation of easy, rapid molecular markers of drug resistance would greatly facilitate this process, and would allow us to overcome difficulties in the use of traditional methods for assaying drug sensitivity.

The increasing failure rates of several anti-malarial drugs in the majority of malaria affected areas means that close monitoring of the epidemiology and dynamics of drug resistance are necessary if we are to implement measures to circumvent the problem. The identification and validation of easy, rapid molecular markers of drug resistance would greatly facilitate this process, and would allow us to overcome difficulties in the use of traditional methods for assaying drug sensitivity.

The increasing failure rates of several anti-malarial drugs in the majority of malaria affected areas means that close monitoring of the epidemiology and dynamics of drug resistance are necessary if we are to implement measures to circumvent the problem. The identification and validation of easy, rapid molecular markers of drug resistance would greatly facilitate this process, and would allow us to overcome difficulties in the use of traditional methods for assaying drug sensitivity.

The molecular basis of chloroquine resistance in malaria parasites is not well understood. In case of falciparum, polymorphism in mdr1 (multidrug resistant) gene and crt (chloroquine resistance transporter) gene are studied to correlate anti-malarial drug (chloroquine, mefloquine, halofantrine) resistance. The tyrosine allele of pfmdr1 gene (N86Y mutation) had been reported to associate with anti-malarial chloroquine and mefloquine resistance. Increased pfmdr1 copy number is also attributed for mefloquine drug resistance in falciparum[12]. The function of pfert is not clear yet. And it is felt that K76T mutation in pfert and N86Y mutation in pfmdr1 can serve as molecular markers for chloroquine resistance in vivo and in vitro [21]. In recent studies in Cambodian sample, it was reported that the MNK/ A/Q haplotype correspond to susceptible, IDT/S/E haplotype for intermediate response and IET/S/EW for highest IC_{50} for chloroquine and the expression level of pfcrt had no effect on the response of the parasite to the drug in vitro[22].

In our study we combined in vitro tests, as well as molecular genotyping at pfcrt and pfmdr1 loci. Here 63 (35.15%) isolates were chloroquine sensitive and 21 (11.75%) isolates were intermediate resistant to chloroquine in in vitro culture. All the sensitive isolate consist of wild type K76+86Y+1246 allele. Whereas intermediate resistant isolates are composed of either single Y86, Y1246, 76T mutation or some time double mutation with 76T+Y1246 and 86Y+1246Y allele. Whereas in Kolkata out of 132 isolates 60 (45.45%) isolates found in vitro chloroquine resistant, while in Purulia 35 (74.46%) isolates found in vitro chloroquine resistance. So out of 95 chloroquine resistant isolates 70 (73.68%) isolates have either double 76T+86Y (P<0.01) or triple 76T+86Y+1246Y (P<0.001) mutation, and left 25 chloroquine resistant isolates have either single 76T mutation or 76T+1246Y mutation.

Molecular and in vitro data were strongly related. PCR-based methods do not detect minor clones in a mixed population, but although a wild-type clone may remain undetected, this is unlikely for in vitro susceptibility, as IC_{50} mainly reflects the susceptibility of the major clone(s) present in the blood sample.

The correlation between pfmdr1 genotypes and quinoline resistance has often generated conflicting results; although it has been suggested that pfmdr1 86Y can be correlated with increased chloroquine resistance in parasites which originated from different areas of the world, but in India chloroquine resistance is mainly correlated with pfcrt gene not with pfmdr1 gene. The threonine allele of pfcrt gene (K76T mutation) had been reported to associate with anti-malarial chloroquine resistance[12,21]. Several groups of scientists showed that in India pfmdr1 mutation was a key mutation but it can not cause severe in vitro resistance to chloroquine, instead of this it causes intermediate resistance to chloroquine. They concluded that P. falciparum genetic cross indicated that chloroquine resistant did not depend on the pfmdr1 gene.

Our present findings implicate that double mutation with pfert 76T + pfmdr1 86Y and triple mutation with pfert 76T + pfmdr1 86Y + pfmdr1 1246Y was highly correlated (P = 0.001) with in vitro chloroquine resistance here, since the presence of both 76T and 86Y in our samples was largely dependent of their chloroquine response, indicating that chloroquine appear to exert selective pressure on this area of the gene.

Our results confirmed that pfert K76T and pfmdr1 D1246Y is a key mutation but it may or may not cause severe in vitro resistance to chloroquine with single mutation, instead of this it causes intermediate resistance to chloroquine. Single pfert K76T and pfmdr1 D1246Y mutations are known to have an effect on chloroquine resistance, as proven by genetic crossbreeding between sensitive and resistant parasites. However the unbalanced numbers of genotypes here does not allow us to draw conclusions on the impact of these mutations.

We think that this Plasmodium species might be a new serotype of P. falciparum, because of its alteration of genetic marker.
From this study it was concluded that severe chloroquine resistance in the eastern part of India is associated mainly with the combination of both pfcr and pfmdrl (either double mutation with 76T + 86Y or triple 76T+ 86Y+ 1246Y) mutation. The increase in the number of both pfcr and pfmdrl mutations was strongly correlated to chloroquine resistance as chloroquine exerts a numerous drug pressure in this region of India. Further studies are needed to determine the total genomics of pfcr and pfmdrl gene, precise incidence of the combination of pfcr and pfmdrl gene mutations and the role of double pfcr and pfmdrl mutation on chloroquine treatment outcome.

So changes in antimalarial policies in favor of the use of chloroquine in these areas of India are likely to increase chloroquine drug pressure, and the clinical efficacy of chloroquine may rapidly fade. New cheap antimalarial combinations (as treatment with ACT is much expensive to third world country) should be tested for treating the drug resistant *P. falciparum*.

**Conflict of interest**

We declare that we have no conflict of interest.

**Acknowledgements**

The authors express gratefulness to Vidyasagar University, Midnapore for having D.O. No: SR/SO/HS-106/2005. The authors also express gratefulness to Wisedpanichkij Raewadee, Chaicha Prompradit for providing the facilities to execute these studies.

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