Advances and roadblocks in the Treatment of Malaria

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April 28, 2020

Abstract

The deployment of artesunate for severe malaria and the artemisinin combination therapies (ACTs) for uncomplicated malaria has been a major advance in antimalarial therapeutics. These drugs have reduced treated mortality, accelerated recovery, and reduced treatment failure rates and transmission from the treated infection. These drugs remain highly effective against falciparum malaria in most malaria endemic areas but significant resistance has emerged in the Greater Mekong subregion of Southeast Asia. Resistance to artemisinin was followed by resistance in the ACT partner drugs, and fit multidrug resistant parasite lineages have now spread widely across the region. ACTs are highly effective against P. vivax and the other malaria species. Recent studies show that radical curative regimens of primaquine (to prevent relapse) can be shortened to seven days, and that the newly introduced single dose tafenoquine is an alternative, although the currently recommended dose is insufficient in Southeast Asia and Oceania. Targeted malaria elimination using focal mass treatments with dihydroartemisinin-piperaquine have proved safe and effective malaria elimination accelerators, but progress overall towards malaria elimination is very slow. Indeed since 2015 overall malaria case numbers globally have risen.

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Summary

The deployment of artesunate for severe malaria and the artemisinin combination therapies (ACTs) for uncomplicated malaria has been a major advance in antimalarial therapeutics. These drugs have reduced treated mortality, accelerated recovery, and reduced treatment failure rates and transmission from the treated infection. These drugs remain highly effective against falciparum malaria in most malaria endemic areas but significant resistance has emerged in the Greater Mekong subregion of Southeast Asia. Resistance to artemisinin was followed by resistance in the ACT partner drugs, and fit multidrug resistant parasite lineages have now spread widely across the region. ACTs are highly effective against P. vivax and the other malaria species. Recent studies show that radical curative regimens of primaquine (to prevent relapse) can be shortened to seven days, and that the newly introduced single dose tafenoquine is an alternative, although the currently recommended dose is insufficient in Southeast Asia and Oceania. Targeted malaria elimination using focal mass treatments with dihydroartemisinin-piperaquine have proved safe and effective...
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**Keywords**: malaria, antimalarial drugs, artemisinin, resistance

**Introduction**

The treatment of malaria has improved substantially in the past 15 years, and morbidity and mortality have declined as a result, but significant challenges lie ahead (1). The major advance in antimalarial therapeutics has been the deployment of drugs derived from artemisinin (qinghaosu) (2). This unusual compound (a sesquiterpene lactone peroxide) is derived from the leaves of the plant *Artemisia annua*. The derivatives of artemisinin; dihydroartemisinin (DHA), artesunate and artemether now form the cornerstone of current antimalarial treatment. They are the most rapidly acting of available antimalarial drugs and they are very well tolerated, but resistance has now emerged in Southeast Asia and it has spread, and there are worrying early reports from other regions. These drugs are partnered in fixed-dose combinations (artemisinin combination therapies) with more slowly eliminated antimalarial drugs for the treatment of uncomplicated malaria. New antimalarial drugs are on the horizon, but they are unlikely to become generally available within the next few years, so current treatments must rely upon the artemisinin derivatives. This review presents some of the recent advances in antimalarial therapeutics and some of the obstacles to progress in controlling and eliminating malaria.

**Advance 1: Improvements in the treatment of severe malaria**

In the two largest randomized controlled trials conducted in patients hospitalised with severe falciparum malaria artesunate was shown to reduce mortality substantially. The mortality reduction (95% confidence interval) was 34.7% (18.5 to 47.6%) in Southeast Asian adults and children and 22.5% (8.1 to 36.9%) in African children (3,4) (Figure 1). In African children it can be difficult to distinguish severe malaria from bacterial sepsis with incidental parasitaemia. In those children with a high likelihood of having severe malaria based on parasite biomass estimation the reduction in mortality was the same (i.e. one third) as observed in the Asian series (5). Artesunate was also better tolerated (less hypoglycaemia) and easier to administer (intravenous injection rather than controlled rate infusion, and no pain and local toxicity following intramuscular injection) than the previous “gold-standard” treatment quinine. Importantly there were also less neurological sequelae in the survivors so lives were not saved at the expense of neurological deficits. Artemether is nearly as active as artesunate *in-vitro* against *P. falciparum* but, being an oil-based intramuscular injection, is slowly and erratically absorbed from the intramuscular injection site *in-vivo* (particularly in shocked patients) (6). In contrast the water soluble artesunate is rapidly and reliably absorbed. This probably explains why the severe malaria mortality following artemether is higher than that following artesunate treatment (7,8). Community based pre-referral rectal artesunate was also shown to reduce malaria attributable mortality by 25% in children unable to take oral antimalarial medications (9) Since these trials reported artesunate has become the generally recommended first line treatment for severe malaria (1) and usage has increased substantially, although unfortunately quinine is still the only available parenteral antimalarial in some malaria endemic areas.

Following drug administration the DHA derivatives are rapidly and reliably converted back to DHA *in-vivo* which is then very rapidly eliminated ($t_{1/2} < 1$ hour) mainly by glucuronidation (10), yet they are highly efficacious when given once daily (11). The main pathological process in severe falciparum malaria is the sequestration of erythrocytes containing mature forms of the parasite in the vascular beds of vital organs (5,12). This reduces microcirculatory blood flow and probably markedly disturbs endothelial function. The key pharmacodynamic effect of the artemisinin derivatives, which mediates the life-saving advantage over quinine, is their action in killing the younger circulating stages of *P. falciparum* before they sequester (12). Unfortunately, this property is reduced markedly in artemisinin resistance.

Apart from the prompt initiation of renal replacement therapies (preferably haemofiltration) in acute kidney injury (12,13), no adjuvant therapies have proved beneficial and many (including aspirin, corticosteroids, heparin, mannitol, high dose phenobarbitone, anti-TNF antibody and rapid fluid loading) were found to be
harmful in severe malaria (12,14).

**Advance 2: Better treatments for uncomplicated falciparum malaria**

The main advance in the treatment of falciparum malaria has been the replacement of the failing monotherapies chloroquine and sulfadoxine-pyrimethamine by artemisinin combination therapies (ACTs) (1). These three-day regimens combine an artemisinin derivative with a more slowly eliminated partner drug (Figure 2A). Four ACTs were recommended originally; artesunate combined with sulfadoxine-pyrimethamine (SP), amodiaquine or mefloquine, and artemether combined with lumefantrine. More recently dihydroartemisinin-piperaquine and artesunate-pyronaridine have been introduced (1,15). All except artesunate-SP are available in combined formulations and all but artemether-lumefantrine are taken once daily. These drugs are all rapidly effective and generally well tolerated (1, 10, 16). Early concerns over potential neurotoxicity and teratogenicity have receded with increasing evidence of safety (12). Worries over piperaquine cardiotoxicity (QT prolongation - risk of Torsade de Pointes) have also declined with large meta-analyses showing no increase in the rate of sudden death (17). ACTs are now recommended as first line treatment for all patients with falciparum malaria, including in pregnancy (1). Costs have been reduced, and generics developed. Hundreds of millions of treatments are dispensed annually.

The main current concern is ensuring access to diagnosis and effective treatment and emerging resistance in *Plasmodium falciparum* to the artemisinin derivatives. Artemisinin resistance manifests as slowing of parasite clearance because of reduced ring stage (the younger asexual forms) parasite susceptibility (18). The discovery of a parasite molecular marker, mutations in the propeller region of the kelch gene on chromosome 13, has greatly facilitated characterization and epidemiological assessments. (19, 20) Reduced parasite killing in artemisinin resistant malaria infections places greater selective “pressure” on the ACT partner drug. This is because the number of parasites which remain after the artemisinin component in an ACT has been eliminated is many orders of magnitude greater - and the probability of selecting resistant mutants is correspondingly higher (Figure 2A). Indeed ACT partner drug resistance has followed artemisinin resistance in the Greater Mekong subregion of Southeast Asia (21-24). Fortunately artemisinin resistant *P. falciparum* are still largely confined to this one region (25), although there are increasing reports that clusters of kelch mutant parasites have been identified elsewhere (27,27). One potential solution is to deploy triple artemisinin combination treatments (TACTs) which combine an artemisinin derivative with two slowly eliminated antimalarials (23). This solves the pharmacokinetic mismatch whereby the rapidly eliminated artemisinin component leaves the slowly eliminated partner drug “unprotected” for days or weeks after the second post-treatment asexual parasite cycle (i.e. >3 days after starting the ACT). With TACTs there are now two slowly eliminated partner drugs providing mutual protection against the selection of resistance (Figure 2B). The two TACTs under current development artemether-lumefantrine-amodiaquine and dihydroartemisinin-piperaquine-mefloquine exploit reciprocal susceptibilities whereby resistance to one of the slowly eliminated components is associated with increased susceptibility to the other. In large scale trials TACTs have proved well tolerated, safe and highly effective (24).

**Advance 3: Chemoprevention in malaria endemic areas**

For many years pregnant women living in a malaria endemic region were advised to take chloroquine chemoprophylaxis to reduce the adverse effects of falciparum malaria on the developing foetus (mainly low birthweight), but as chloroquine resistance worsened chemoprophylaxis was replaced by intermittent presumptive treatment with sulphadoxine-pyrimethamine (IPT-SP) (1). This involves giving full treatment doses at intervals. Although preventive efficacy is much greater than treatment efficacy against resistant *P. falciparum*, IPT-SP is threatened by worsening resistance – both to the antifol and the sulphonamide components (28). There is increasing evidence that dihydroartemisinin-piperaquine (DP) provides excellent antimalarial chemoprevention for approximately one month, is well tolerated, and appears safe in pregnancy (29, 30). IPT is imperfect chemoprophylaxis. In order to provide continuous suppressive prophylaxis DP needs to be given at least monthly, and preferably weekly (31). The IPT-SP concept has also been advocated in infants, where treatment doses of SP are to be given together with the routine EPI vaccines at the ages of 2, 3 and 9 months. This is not widely practiced as the benefits are relatively small, and SP resistance is
widespread. A more effective strategy, which is now implemented widely across the Sahel region of Africa (where there is intense malaria transmission largely confined to the 3-4 month rainy season), is seasonal malaria chemoprevention (SMC) with monthly administration of treatment doses of amodiaquine together with SP to all children aged between 6 and 59 months (1, 32). SMC prevents symptomatic reinfection and substantially reduces the malaria burden. Adding azithromycin to amodiaquine and SP provides no additional benefit (33). Resistance to both components of SMC is widespread in East Africa but whether resistance is impacting on the chemoprophylactic activity of SMC is uncertain currently – more information is needed on this critical point to guide policy.

Advances 4: Mass treatment as a malaria elimination accelerator

Where malaria transmission is low the prospects for elimination increase. In the Greater Mekong subregion (GMS), which harbours the most drug resistant *P. falciparum* in the world, there is a general consensus that the only way to counter multi-drug resistance effectively is to eliminate all falciparum malaria. This is an area of low seasonal malaria transmission and targeted malaria elimination, even in the most remote and inaccessible areas, has been very effective (34, 35). The key to successful elimination is the support of village health workers in every village (usually 300-800 people) to provide diagnosis of malaria with a rapid diagnostic test, and treatment with an effective ACT (36). In foci of higher transmission (sometimes called “hot spots”), where a significant proportion of the healthy population have asymptomatic parasitaemias, mass treatments with dihydroartemisinin-piperaquine have proved very effective and well tolerated “accelerators” of elimination (34,35).

Obstacles 1: The emergence and spread of antimalarial drug resistance

There is resistance in *Plasmodium falciparum* to all currently used antimalarial drugs but there is substantial variation in the geographic distribution and degree of reduced susceptibility. The most resistant parasites are found in the eastern greater Mekong subregion of Southeast Asia. Multidrug resistant *P. falciparum* is also prevalent in parts of South America. In general *P. falciparum* in Africa is more sensitive with higher levels of resistance in East compared with West Africa (37). Resistance is generally less in the other malarials although antifol resistance in *P. vivax* is widespread and chloroquine resistance in *P. vivax* is found throughout Indonesia and Papua New Guinea (38). Antifol resistance in both *P. falciparum* and *P. vivax* results from stepwise accumulation of mutations in the *dhfr* gene encoding the drug target dihydrofolate reductase , (S108N, N51I, C59R) and sulphonamide resistance results from accumulation of mutations in the *dhps* gene encoding the drug target dihydropteroate synthase (A437G,K540E, A581G). In general, the more of these mutations there are more resistant is the *P. falciparum* infection (39). The highest level of antifol resistance is conferred by the *Pfdhfr* I164L mutation (found in Southeast Asia and South America). This renders parasites completely resistant to pyrimethamine. Resistance to chloroquine and the structurally related antimalarials which interfere with haem detoxification results from mutations in the transporter *PfCRT*, and to a lesser extent mutations in *Pfdmdr* (notably N86Y, N1042D, S1034C, and D1246Y). Positions 72 to 76 are mutated in the *PfCRT* of most *P. falciparum* (causing 4-aminoquinoline resistance) with K76T being consistently mutant in the five major haplotypes (CVIET, SVMNT, SVIET, CVMNT and CVTNT) (39). Recently downstream mutations from the chloroquine resistance locus have been strongly associated with piperaquine resistance (23,39). Copy number increase in wild type *Pfmdr* is the main identified genetic association with mefloquine and lumefantrine resistance (22). Atovaquone resistance arises readily as a result of mutations in the mitochondrial multicopy cytochrome b gene (usually at position 268; Y268S or Y268N).

From a therapeutic perspective high level resistance precludes use of chloroquine and sulphadoxine-pyrimethamine alone in most areas (1). Amodiaquine alone is also not sufficiently efficacious in many parts of the tropics but still contributes significantly to efficacy in combinations - and artesunate-amodiaquine remains efficacious in Central and West Africa. Significant resistance to mefloquine and piperaquine is prevalent only in the Greater Mekong subregion (GMS) of Southeast Asia. Fortunately in these areas artesunate-lumefantrine and artesunate-pyronaridine currently remain highly effective (24, 40). It is an ominous precedent that the eastern GMS is the same area from which resistance to chloroquine and sulphadoxine-pyrimethamine arose and then spread to India and Africa (at a cost of millions of lives), and it is where resistance to the artemisinin
drugs has arisen first.

**Obstacles 2: Artemisinin resistance**

Artemisinin resistance was found first near the Thailand-Cambodia border. It manifests by slowing of parasite clearance which reflects reduced “ring stage” killing (1). In falciparum malaria the young ring stage parasites in the first third of the 48 hour asexual life cycle circulate in the blood stream before the infected erythrocytes adhere to vascular endothelium (cytoadherence) – a process called sequestration. This does not occur to a significant extent with the other human malarias. Sequestration is considered central to the potentially lethal pathology of falciparum malaria, and the life saving benefit of the artemisinin derivatives (Figure 1) results from reducing sequestration by killing the ring stage parasites (12). The pharmacodynamic effect is best measured in-vivo from the log-linear decline in parasite densities which follows a variable lag phase. The slope provides the parasite clearance rate and thus a half-life. Parasite clearance half-lives over 5 hours are generally associated with artemisinin resistance (18,20) (Figure 3). When artemisinin resistance was recognised first it was observed there were multiple independent mutations in the Pf kelch gene propeller region but in recent years successful artemisinin resistant parasite lineages have outcompeted the other parasites and spread across large areas (37). In the Eastern GMS a parasite lineage bearing the C580Y mutation has predominated, whereas in Myanmar a lineage bearing the F446I mutation has spread over large areas (41, 42) (Figure 4). The F446I mutation confers a lower degree of resistance (in terms of parasite clearance) than many of the other propeller mutants. This may reflect a lesser fitness cost and thus greater competitive advantage in areas of higher transmission. These artemisinin resistant parasites have then acquired resistance to the ACT partner drugs -piperaquine (in the Eastern GMS) and mefloquine (along the Thailand-Myanmar border). This has resulted in increasing rates of ACT failure (21-23) forcing Governments to change their first-line treatment policies. There is serious concern that these resistant parasites could spread westward, or that artemisinin resistance could emerge de-novo elsewhere, and derail global aspirations to control and eliminate malaria.

**Obstacles 3: Underuse of primaquine**

Primaquine is a very important antimalarial as both a single dose gametocytocide in falciparum malaria, and in multiple dose “radical cure” regimens to prevent relapse in vivax and ovale malaria (1), but it is underused. This is because of concerns over haemolytic toxicity in glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase (G6PD) deficiency (43). Gene frequencies for X-linked G6PD deficiency average 8-10% in tropical areas (although prevalences are lower in vivax malaria), but screening tests to identify G6PD deficient patients are not widely available. Relapses are recurrences of malaria which follow complete cure of the blood stage infection. They derive from dormant parasite forms (hypnozoites) which persist in the liver. Hypnozoites are resistant to all current antimalarial drugs except the 8-aminoquinolines (8-AQ) (1). Without radical cure relapse rates vary between 20% and 80%. Relapse is a major cause of morbidity and mortality in higher transmission settings (44). Primaquine has usually been given in 7 or 14 day “radical cure” courses. As these cause predictable haemolysis in G6PD deficient patients, G6PD testing is recommended (1,43). The recent development of rapid screening tests is a significant advance which should enable wider safe use of primaquine for radical cure, and thereby make elimination a more achievable target. Recent very large studies confirm that the treatment courses even for the higher dose primaquine regimens (total 7mg/kg) can be condensed into a one week course. With G6PD testing to exclude deficient patients these are well tolerated , and if these adhered to, radical curative efficacy is very high (>95%) (45, 46).

Until recently primaquine was used in a single 0.75mg base/kg dose (45mg adult dose) as a P. falciparum gametocytocide to reduce transmissibility of the treated infection. This was given in addition to the standard three day ACT for treatment. Re-evaluation of the transmission blocking dose-response relationship for primaquine indicates that the same gametocytoidal effect is obtained with a dose three times lower (0.25mg base/kg) with obviously less haemolytic risk. This obviates the need for G6PD testing- so this has now become the recommended dose (1,47).

**Obstacle 4: Medicine quality**
Poor medicine quality is often ignored in discussions of disease control but the problem is massive, and it affects particularly the antimalarial drugs. In many countries the private sector is main source of antimalarials and there is weak regulation of pharmaceuticals (48). A recent systematic review and meta-analysis estimated that 12.4% of antibiotics and 19.1% of antimalarials in low-income and middle-income countries were substandard or falsified, with an estimated economic impact ranging from US$10 billion to $200 billion (49).

**Obstacles 5: Political roadblocks and funding gaps**

Discussion of roadblocks would be incomplete without considering the political dimension. Although malaria has a reasonable global profile in comparison with the “neglected tropical diseases” it is often low in National Health priorities, particularly in Asia and the Americas where it is predominantly a disease of the poor or marginalized. Much of the funding for malaria control comes from International Agencies such as the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria (GFATM) and the President’s Malaria Initiative (PMI) or from bilateral donors. Whereas the world was doing very well in reducing malaria morbidity and mortality in the decade between 2005 and 2015, the total number of malaria cases has increased steadily since then (50). There has been no in-depth analysis to explain this reversal, and no clear evidence that providing more funding without reforms will reverse this trend.

**Advances 5: Tafenoquine**

For over 60 years primaquine has been the only widely available drug in the 8-aminoquinoline class. In the past year, after a long and difficult gestation, the slowly eliminated 8-AQ tafenoquine was registered and launched. Tafenoquine is a well tolerated single dose treatment which solves the problem of potentially poor adherence (51,52). Like the other 8-aminoquinolines tafenoquine also causes oxidant haemolysis in G6PD deficiency. However the rapidly eliminated primaquine can be stopped in case of haemolysis in a G6PD deficient patient, thereby limiting the consequent anaemia – whereas tafenoquine continues to cause haemolysis for weeks. Thus tafenoquine has the advantage of simplicity and reliability of dosing, but at the expense of an increased risk of serious haemolysis. Currently available rapid screening tests identify individuals who have 30-40% of normal erythrocyte G6PD activity which identifies all male hemizygotes and female homozygotes, but they do not identify the majority of female heterozygotes (whose blood contains a mixture of G6PD deficient and normal erythrocytes). Safe use of tafenoquine therefore requires development and deployment of simple quantitative G6PD screening tests which can identify individuals with <70% of normal red G6PD activity in blood samples. These are under development, but they are not yet ready for roll out. In East Asia and Oceania relapse is the main cause of vivax illness, a major contributor to morbidity and mortality, and a major obstacle to elimination. The dose of tafenoquine currently recommended (300mg adult dose) is too low for this populous region, where a large proportion of the world’s relapses occur. In the pre-registration clinical trials tafenoquine 300mg proved inferior to a sub-optimal dose of primaquine (52) (Figure 5). Unfortunately there are no plans currently to rectify this.

**Advances 6: New antimalarials in development**

Several new antimalarial drugs are in clinical development (53). These include

1. cipargamin, a spiroindolone compound that is more rapidly acting (in terms of accelerating parasite clearance) than artemisinins. It inhibits PfATPase4.
2. artefenomel, a synthetic peroxide which is more stable and more slowly eliminated arterolane.
3. Ganapolide, a potent imidazolopiperazine compound with an unknown mode of action;
4. P218, a dihydrofolate reductase inhibitor with preserved activity against prevalent antifol resistant parasites.
5. DSM265, a slowly acting dihydroorotate dehydrogenase inhibitor
6. Ferroquine, an aminooquinoline compound with similarities to chloroquine but activity against chloroquine resistant parasites.
7. MMV390048 is a novel aminopyridine antimalarial compound that inhibits Plasmodium phosphatidylinositol-4-kinase (PI4K)
Most of these drugs are in phase 2 testing, and so if some of these compounds do proceed successfully to phase 3 studies and regulatory approval, likely in combinations, and these new combination therapies are well tolerated, effective and affordable they will be a welcome addition to the antimalarial armamentarium. But this is will not happen in the next few years. This means that current antimalarial treatment strategies must make use of the currently available medicines.

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Legends to Figures

Figure 1: Mortality by treatment arm in randomized comparative controlled trials in strictly defined severe falciparum malaria (which together enrolled 2874 adults and 7424 children). The size of the circle is approximately proportional to the size of the trial and the error bars are 95% confidence intervals. The adults were enrolled mainly in Southeast Asia and the children in Africa (4,5,7,8).

Figure 2: In artemisinin combination treatments (2A: left panel) the three day artemisinin regimen in sensitive infections (AS) results in rapid parasite killing and consequent decline in parasitaemia. The logarithmic scale vertical axis shows the total number of parasites in the body of an adult with approximately 2% parasitaemia. The ACT partner drug has only approximately 1000 parasites to remove in this example (green triangle). In contrast in an artemisinin resistant infection (AR) there is much less parasite killing initially and the ACT partner drug now has approximately 100 million parasites to remove with a substantially greater risk of treatment failure (recrudescence) and thus selective pressure to the emergence of partner drug resistance. In the right panel (2B) with TACTs there are now two slowly eliminated drugs providing a potentially greater antimalarial effect in resistant infections and ensuring mutual protection against the emergence of resistance. The detection limit (dashed line) is the limit for microscopy to identify a malaria infection.

Figure 3: The parasite clearance half-lives associated with Pf kelch mutations in patients with acute falciparum malaria studied in the TRAC1 study (20). WT= wild type (note parasite clearance half-lives can still be much longer than 5 hours in Pf kelch wild-type infections). Mutations in the “propeller “region are usually associated with slow parasite clearance, the phenotypic hallmark of artemisinin resistance, although there is substantial inter-individual variation and some mutations (A578S: pink arrow) are clearly not associated with artemisinin resistance. In the GMS parasite lineages associated with the F446I mutation have spread widely in Myanmar, and a lineages associated with C580Y was common along the Thailand-Myanmar border before targeted elimination activities. In the Eastern GMS lineages associated with R539T and C580Y both spread but in recent years the C580Y lineage (termed Pf Pailin) has dominated. Modified from Ashley et al.
The spread of artemisinin resistant *P. falciparum* parasite lineages across the Greater Mekong subregion (GMS). A single long *pfKelch* C580Y haplotype (from -50 to +31·5 kb either side of the Pfkelch gene), which emerged in Western Cambodia in 2008 (*Pf* Pailin), has spread across the Eastern GMS. In Myanmar C580Y parasites of a different lineage have spread widely and a single *pfKelch* F446I haplotype which probably originated in the North of Myanmar has spread widely across the country; modified from Imwong et al (42) with permission.

**Figure 5**

Individual patient meta-analysis (52) of freedom from recurrence of *P. vivax* malaria (relapse prevention) in the two pivotal phase 3 studies in adults which compared tafenoquine single dose (300mg) with a low dose primaquine regimen (15mg base day for 14 days) (46,47). The dashed vertical line represents the prespecified noninferiority margin of an odds ratio for recurrence of 1.45 (tafenoquine vs. primaquine). In Southeast Asia, which has high relapse rates, tafenoquine was significantly inferior (orange highlighting) to the low dose primaquine regimen (which is considered inferior to a high dose (30mg base/day) primaquine regimen); modified from Llanos-Cuentas et al (52) with permission.