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Climate change seen conducive to breeding of more mosquitoes

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PUERTO PRINCESA CITY, Palawan, Philippines—Mosquitoes carrying malaria parasites and other deadly diseases that afflict Palawan primarily and most of the country's 79 other provinces are adapting to the changing environment caused by global warming, medical practitioners here have observed.

A certain species of mosquito, the anopheles litoratis that is previously not known to be present in Palawan, has been reported in the province's southernmost tip of Balabac and is believed to be induced by the changing temperatures in the area.

Malaria prone

Dr. Ray Angluben, head of an internationally funded malaria eradication campaign in Palawan, said during a malaria situation briefing Friday that Balabac, the southernmost tip of Palawan, still accounts for the highest incidence of malaria in the province.

"Balabac has reported this particular species in saline areas," Angluben said, theorizing that the phenomenon may be linked in particular to the frequently changing weather conditions brought by La Niña and La Niño as a result of the earth's increasing temperature.

Angluben said they are completing their studies on the correlation between the increased incidence of rainfall and the breeding habits of the anopheles mosquitos, the primary carrier of the malaria plasmodium parasite.

Climate effects

He noted that since launching the Kilusan Ligtas Malaria (KLM) program by the provincial government and its partners in 1999, they have observed that temperature changes have been affecting the growth and prevalence of mosquitoes.

"The more rain, the more breeding sites are created. Certain temperature level factors also seem to influence the growth of the vectors (species of malaria carrying mosquitoes)," Angluben said.

Malaria has been documented in 65 out of 79 provinces in the country, with Palawan topping the list.

The disease is transmitted by the bite of an anopheles mosquito which causes a patient's red blood cells to inflame and rupture. Its symptoms include high fever, severe headache, body weakness and nausea.

Drug resistant

Scientists and health practitioners are also concerned about the increasing resistance of the malaria parasite to traditional medication which currently involves a combination of two drugs.

"We have made some observations that the malaria parasites are becoming more resistant to the combination drug of chroloquinne and fancidor so that by next year there will be a change in the treatment approach utilizing second-line drugs such as Coartem," Angluben said.

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[^ Back to top](#)