

CDC: Artesunate Available for Treatment of Severe Malaria in the U.S.

IV artesunate is available for treatment of severe malaria in the United States through an Investigational New Drug (IND) Protocol at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Artesunate is in the class of medications known as artemisinins, which are derivatives from the "qing hao" or sweet wormwood plant (*Artemisia annua*). This is the first artemisinin to be available in the United States. Only CDC's Drug Service and Quarantine Stations will be permitted to release the medication for use.

Approximately 1,400 cases of malaria are diagnosed in the United States each year; approximately 5 to 10% of them are cases of severe malaria. Until now, intravenous quinidine gluconate was the only parenteral drug available in the United States for the treatment of severe malaria. However, quinidine has cardiotoxic effects and has become less and less available in US hospitals with the advent of newer antiarrhythmic drugs.

Walter Reed Army Institute for Research (WRAIR) has agreed to provide a supply of this medication to CDC for release to hospitals in the United States with malaria patients who need IV treatment because of severe disease, high parasitemia, or inability to take oral medications, and who either do not have timely access to intravenous quinidine, do not tolerate quinidine, have contraindications to quinidine, or in whom quinidine treatment has proven ineffective.

The drug will be provided to hospitals free of charge upon request and on an emergency basis, by the CDC Drug Service or by one of the CDC Quarantine Stations located around the country. Physicians who receive the drug will be requested to notify CDC of any adverse event following administration of the drug. To enroll a patient with severe malaria in this treatment protocol, contact the CDC Malaria Hotline: 770-488-7788 (M-F, 8am-4:30pm, eastern time) or after hours, call: 770-488-7100 and request to speak with a CDC Malaria Branch clinician.

Here is a link to the announcement on the CDC website:

http://www.cdc.gov/malaria/features/artesunate_now_available.htm

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