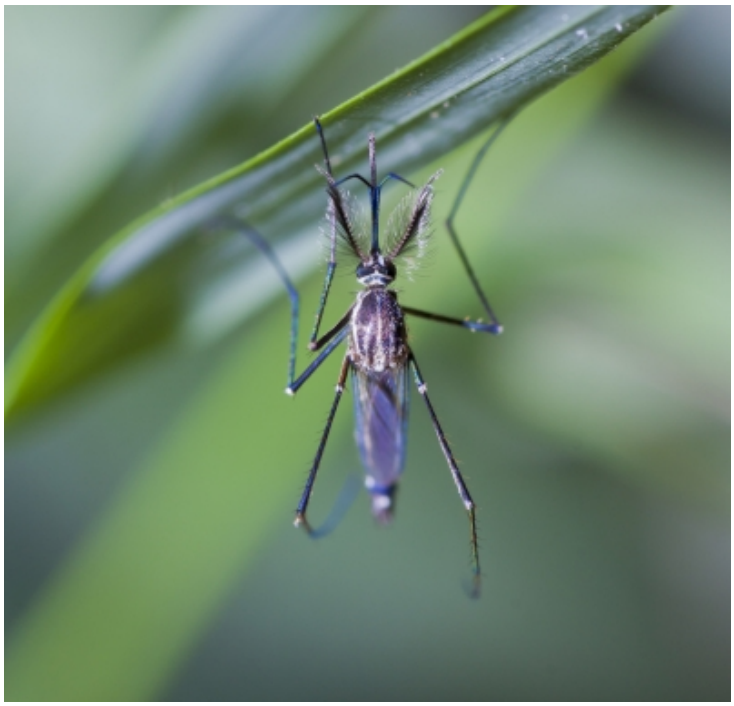
BioSpectrum the business of Bio & Health Sciences ASIA EDITION

US firm discovers potential biomarker for malaria

11 November 2014 | News | By BioSpectrum Bureau

US firm discovers potential biomarker for malaria



Singapore: US based biotech firm, Genocea Biosciences, has identified a cluster of antigens, generated using its ATLAS antigen discovery platform, that could be a potential biomarker of Malaria.

Genocea researchers stated that they have found evidence that the T cell immunological memory can be detected many years after the previous clinical episode of malaria.

Malaria is caused by Plasmodium falciparum (Pf), a parasite that is transmitted through mosquito bites and rapidly travels to the liver, where it replicates in large numbers and is released into the bloodstream, causing illness.

"This is one of the more unexpected findings coming out of our ATLAS antigen discovery platform, since immunity to the parasite is thought to be short-lived. Understanding the natural history of responses to diseases as complex as malaria is a necessary first step towards the development of immunotherapies that prevent and treat disease," said Dr Jessica Baker Flechtner, senior vice president of research, Genocea. "This finding paves the way for the identification of novel biomarkers indicating Pf exposure, opens avenues for the development of new diagnostic tools, and advances Genocea's efforts to identify antigens that could form the basis of a future preventative medicine."

Genocea is collaborating with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to advance the company's vaccine program. In September 2014, Genocea received a $1.2 million grant from the Gates Foundation for the identification of protective T cell antigens for malaria vaccines, extending the collaboration through 2015.