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Health Ministry bans rapid malaria diagnostic tests

10 April 2018 | News

The prohibition is based on the observation that serological testing is not practical for routine diagnosis of theacute form of the disease because of the time required to develop the antibody.

The Union Health Ministry has banned the use of ‘antibody detecting rapid diagnostic tests’ for routine malaria diagnosis due to concerns over the practicality of the approach.

The antibody detection for malaria is carried out through an indirect fluorescent antibody test in patients infected with Plasmodium, which is the known causative organism of the disease.

The prohibition is based on the observation that serological testing is not practical for routine diagnosis of the acute form of the disease because of the time required to develop the antibody.

The testing is attributed to the persistence of antibodies even after clearance of an active infection and evidence suggests that serology only measures past exposure but does not identify existing infection.

While the antibody detecting rapid diagnostic tests are preferred for their low cost and free availability, they are reported to have led to a high false positive rate in endemic areas.

The ban will not impact the diagnosis of malaria sufferers as the most common tests used in diagnosis are antigen detecting rapid diagnostic tests and blood smear examination.