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US scientists work on breath analysers for malaria detection

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A group of researchers from Washington University in St. Louis are working on developing a new breath test that could detect malaria. The team found that malaria in blood leaves a typical breathprint that is unique and can be detected using a breath analyser test.

The study shows that when a person gets malaria, he or she can exhale certain chemical compounds that could be easily detected using an appropriate device.

The scientists noted that the breath of a person with malaria contains a compound that is similar to a vapour that plants produce that can attract mosquitoes.

The team feels that malaria detection using simple tools such as this breath analyser could be a boon to the regions affected with this disease.

At present malaria requires blood tests for diagnosis. There are simple finger prick tests for diagnosis of malaria but these tests are limited in their success at diagnosing malaria correctly.

Simple non-invasive and easy to administer tests such as these breath analyser tests could be helpful in rural areas where resources are scarce.

Such a tool once developed would be able to detect the disease early and provide life saving treatment to the infected persons. It can also act as a surveillance tool to know the prevalence of the infection in large populations where healthcare reaches poorly.