CHANGES IN PLATELET COUNT IN UNCOMPLICATED AND SEVERE FALCIPARUM MALARIA

Wattana Leowattana¹, Noppadon Tangpukdee¹, Sai Kaung Thar², Souwanit Nakasiri¹, Siripun Srivilairit³, Shigeyuki Kano⁴, Polrat Wilairatana¹ and Srivicha Krudsood⁵

¹Department of Clinical Tropical Medicine, ²Bangkok School of Tropical Medicine, ³Hospital for Tropical Diseases, ⁴Department of Tropical Hygiene, Faculty of Tropical Medicine, Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand; ⁵Department of Tropical Medicine and Malaria, Research Institute, National Center for Global Health and Medicine (NCGM), Tokyo, Japan

Abstract. This study investigated alterations in platelet counts pre- and post-treatment with artemisinin derivatives in uncomplicated and severe falciparum malaria. Serial platelet counts were taken over 4 weeks for 110 uncomplicated and 110 severe falciparum malaria patients admitted to the Hospital for Tropical Diseases during 2005-2008. On admission, prior to treatment, thrombocytopenia was found in 73.6% of uncomplicated falciparum malaria patients and 90.9% of severe falciparum malaria cases. Platelet levels significantly lower in severe malaria cases. Although initial platelet counts were lower than normal in both study groups, they slowly increased significantly over time, and approached normal levels by several weeks post-treatment. No bleeding was evident during treatment, and none of the patients required a platelet transfusion. Platelet transfusions are not required for malaria patients with thrombocytopenia who have no bleeding.

Key words: uncomplicated malaria, severe malaria, platelet counts, thrombocytopenia