Symposium 7.3

Antiparasitic drugs; what's new?

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Traditionally neglected by comparison with other anti-infective drugs, the need for new antiparasitic drugs has been recognised and addressed in the past ten years. In particular public-private partnerships have been formed to develop new compounds and these are already bearing fruit. In the treatment of leishmaniasis both the aminoglycoside paromomycin (aminosidine) and the cytotoxic miltefosine have been developed and deployed. Several other compounds are in development. For trypanosomiasis drugs traditionally used in Chagas disease (notably nifurtimox) are being evaluated in sleeping sickness, and improved arsenical and DFMO regimens have been developed. In both these kinetoplastid diseases combinations are theoretically preferable to monotherapies, and are now being studied. In malaria this is now accepted and artemisinin combination treatment is now generally recommended as first line treatment for falciparum malaria. The pipeline of new antimalarial drugs looks healthier than at any previous time, although most are aimed at known targets: new targets are still urgently needed.