# Liverpool scientists lead clinical trial for oral treatment against fatal tropical disease



Scientists in Liverpool are spearheading a groundbreaking clinical trial aimed at tackling visceral leishmaniasis, a tropical parasitic disease responsible for thousands of deaths annually. The disease, which is transmitted through the bite of infected sand flies, predominantly affects regions in Asia, East Africa, and Brazil. It causes symptoms such as fever and fatigue, and without treatment, it is almost invariably fatal.

Currently available treatments for visceral leishmaniasis require painful daily injections over a 17-day period. These therapies are also difficult to store and transport because they need to be kept cool—factors which severely limit their accessibility, especially in low-income areas with limited healthcare infrastructure.

The new Liverpool-based study, conducted at the NIHR Liverpool Clinical Research Facility at the Royal Liverpool University Hospital, is testing an oral medication known as DNDi-6899. This drug, developed in collaboration with the University Hospitals of Liverpool Group (UHLG), the University of Liverpool, and the Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi), is designed to be easier to store, transport, and administer. If successful, it could represent a major advancement in the fight against this neglected disease and potentially save thousands of lives.

Professor Richard Fitzgerald, the principal study investigator, highlighted the importance of this research. Speaking to the Express, he said: "Visceral leishmaniasis claims thousands of lives every year. Current treatments are often inaccessible to those who need them most, particularly in low-income regions where healthcare systems are limited. This trial offers hope for a more practical and effective solution, one that could reach those most at risk and save countless lives. It also reflects the skills and expertise here in Liverpool, showing that we are at the forefront of developing new medicines for a disease that affects people on the other side of the world."

The two-week clinical trial is currently recruiting volunteers from Liverpool and its surrounding areas, with several participants already having completed a screening process. The project is funded by the Wellcome Trust and is part of the broader efforts taking place at the University of Liverpool’s Centre for Experimental Therapeutics (TherEx). This centre focuses on improving health outcomes by optimising existing medicines and developing novel treatments.

Professor Saye Khoo, a fellow researcher involved in the study, explained the practical benefits they aim to achieve through this collaboration with DNDi. Speaking to the Express, he said: "By collaborating with DNDi, we aim to develop a treatment that can be stored in varying conditions, delivered directly to vulnerable communities, and administered easily—without the need for hospitalisation."

This trial represents a significant step toward overcoming the logistical challenges associated with current treatments for visceral leishmaniasis and could ultimately improve access to care for affected populations across multiple continents.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://dndi.org/press-releases/2025/liverpool-clinical-trial-to-advance-treatment-visceral-leishmaniasis/> - This source confirms the ongoing clinical trial in Liverpool for visceral leishmaniasis, involving NHS University Hospitals of Liverpool Group, the University of Liverpool, and DNDi, and quotes Professor Richard Fitzgerald and Professor Saye Khoo about the trial's aims and significance.
2. <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/researcher/news/articles/liverpool-clinical-trial-aims-to-advance-life-changing-treatment-for-a-deadly-parasitic-disease/> - This article verifies the collaboration between Liverpool institutions and the focus on developing a new oral treatment for visceral leishmaniasis, as well as details about the trial taking place at the Liverpool Clinical Research Facility.
3. <https://www.miragenews.com/liverpool-trial-targets-breakthrough-in-deadly-1449440/> - This news piece provides supporting information about the Liverpool trial, the logistical challenges of current treatments, and remarks from Professors Fitzgerald and Khoo on the potential impacts of the new oral drug DNDi-6899.
4. <https://dndi.org/press-releases/2024/oral-drug-against-visceral-leishmaniasis-enters-clinical-trial-ethiopia/> - This source describes the oral drug for visceral leishmaniasis entering clinical trials and highlights DNDi’s efforts in developing patient-friendly treatments that align with the goals of the Liverpool trial.
5. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/leishmaniasis> - The World Health Organization’s fact sheet explains visceral leishmaniasis as a tropical parasitic disease transmitted by sand flies, its fatal nature without treatment, and the challenges posed by existing therapies, supporting the background information in the article.
6. <https://www.wellcome.org/grant-funding/strategic-awards/centre-experimental-therapeutics-therex> - This page details the University of Liverpool’s Centre for Experimental Therapeutics (TherEx), its focus on improving medicines and developing new treatments, and mentions funding support from Wellcome Trust, corroborating aspects of the study's research environment.
7. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2046451/uk-city-leads-fight-against> - Please view link - unable to able to access data