

How To Spot A 'Neglected Tropical Disease'

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12:52 pm

June 21, 2012



Thomson Reuters

Get the picture?

There's an easy way to spot diseases that aren't getting much attention.

You don't even have to leave your chair, if you've got a computer and access to databases of scientific papers published around the world. Just compare the number of papers on a disease with the number of people affected by it.

Simple, right?

Some analysts at Thomson Reuters did just that, combing 20 years' worth of scientific papers and rounding up figures on disease prevalence. They [wrote a report](#) on what they found and boiled down some of the highlights in an [infographic](#).

For instance, intestinal worms are a problem for about a billion people. How many research papers were published on the topic in the last two decades? Just shy of 11,000, the researchers found.

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Lately, [dengue fever](#) is bucking the trend. In the last decade, there have been more than 8,000 papers on dengue, a four-fold increase over the previous decade. The mosquito-borne

infection causes an excruciating flu-like illness and is on the rise on urban ares of the developing world.

And at least one disease that's getting less attention probably deserves it. Guinea-worm disease, or [dracunculiasis](#), is well on its way to elimination. The Carter Center, which has [pushed for eradication of guinea worm](#), says there were less than 1,100 cases of the illness in 2011, compared with about 3.5 million in 1986.

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