First Malaria Drug for Newborns and Young Infants

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance*

Why in News?

Recently, Novartis has received approval from Swissmedic for Coartem (artemether-lumefantrine) Baby, a first malaria medicine for newborns and young infants.

- **Alternate Name -** The medicine is also known as Reimit Baby in several countries.
- **Joint Development -** Developed in collaboration with Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV) to target life-threatening vascular bone disease.
- **African Participation -** Eight African countries took part in the assessment process and are expected to issue fast-track approvals.
- **Birth Risk -** Around 30 million babies are born annually in malaria-prone African areas.
- **Infection Data -** Surveys in West Africa show 3.4% to 18.4% infection rates in babies under 6 months.
- **Infant Breakthrough -** This marks the first clinically proven malaria treatment for infants under 4.5 kg.
- **Treatment Gap -** Previously, such infants were treated with older children's doses, risking overdose and toxicity.
- **Vaccine Unavailability -** Malaria vaccines are not approved for the youngest infants, worsening the protection gap.
- **Trial Limitation -** Young infants are typically excluded from clinical trials due to immature liver metabolism.
- **Dose Adaptation -** Novartis developed a dose suited for neonates with support from MMV, Kaoma, and Palm Africa Consortium.
- **Child-Friendly -** The medicine dissolves in breast milk and features a sweet cherry flavor for easier administration.
- **Expert Opinion -** Researchers highlighted dosing challenges due to newborns' underdeveloped liver functions.
- **Global Access -** Novartis aims to provide the treatment on a largely not-for-profit basis in malaria-endemic areas.

Reference

Medical Dialogues | Coartem Baby - First Malaria Drug for Young Infants



SHANKAR
IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering