

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**NOVA,HHMI TANGLED BANK STUDIOS, AND WINGSPAN WIN 2024 AAAS KAVLI SCIENCE JOURNALISM AWARD**

***Acclaimed PBS Science Series Honored with the Video In-Depth Reporting Gold Award for One-Hour Documentary, THE BATTLE TO BEAT MALARIA***

[**pbs.org/nova**](https://pbs.org/nova) **|** [**@novapbs**](https://twitter.com/novapbs)

**BOSTON, MA; November 13, 2024 —** The **PBS** science series **NOVA**,a production of **GBH**; science-focused **HHMI Tangled Bank Studios**;and **Wingspan Productions** have been honored with a **2024 AAAS Kavli Science Journalism Award** for their one-hour film, **THE BATTLE TO BEAT MALARIA**. The documentary, produced by **Wingspan Productions** and **HHMI Tangled Bank Studios** in association with **NOVA/GBH** and **Arte France**, was recognized with the **Gold Award for Video In-Depth Reporting**. Filmmakers **Catherine Gale,** **Archie Baron, Sean B. Carroll, Jared Lipworth, Cathy Houlihan,** and **Alex Keefe** collaborated on the film, which brings viewers an exclusive behind-the-scenes look at the University of Oxford research team that spearheaded the new R21 vaccine — being hailed as a major breakthrough in the fight against malaria — and its long path from development to approval by the World Health Organization (W.H.O.) in October 2023.

The film tells the dramatic inside story of a new vaccine to fight against one of humanity’s oldest and most devastating plagues, including an intimate view of the scientists, doctors, healthcare workers, and trial participants battling this deadly disease. **THE BATTLE TO BEAT MALARIA** premiered November 15, 2023 on PBS and is available for streaming at [**pbs.org/nova**](https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/video/zero-to-infinity/)and on the [**PBS App**](https://www.pbs.org/pbs-video-app/).

“We are proud to be recognized by the AAAS for **THE BATTLE TO BEAT MALARIA**,“ said **NOVA Co-Executive Producer Julia Cort**. “And truly grateful to the filmmakers — **Catherine, Archie, Sean, Jared, Cathy, and Alex** — who did an incredible job unraveling the science behind a quest that spanned four continents, while capturing such deeply moving stories of human resilience and struggle against all odds.”

“**THE BATTLE TO BEAT MALARIA** is a powerful example of NOVA’s commitment to storytelling that showcases how science dramatically impacts human lives and the world around us,” said **NOVA Co-Executive Producer Chris Schmidt**. “We are honored and humbled to be recognized alongside so many talented winners, and thankful to the AAAS for celebrating films that spotlight scientists at work.”

“This is an important story about a scientific breakthrough that’s going to save millions of lives,” said **Executive Producer and Head of HHMI Tangled Bank Studios Jared Lipworth**. “To be able to showcase the process of scientific discovery as it happens — and to be recognized by AAAS for that feat — is a true honor.”

In all of medical science, there has been no longer or tougher battle than the fight against mosquito-borne malaria. It is one of the world’s deadliest diseases. More than 200 million people fall ill and approximately 600,000 people die of malaria every year — most are children under five years old. But now, researchers in the United Kingdom, India, Tanzania, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Kenya are on the brink of a breakthrough: a safe, highly effective, low-cost vaccine that could revolutionize the fight against malaria.

Effective vaccines against malaria have been notoriously hard to design. The malaria parasite’s complex, multi-stage life cycle means that it is much harder to defeat than viruses like smallpox, polio, and even COVID-19. Today malaria is considered a tropical disease, but until very recently it affected people all over the world. Thanks to the insecticide DDT and the increased availability of malaria tests and treatments, the U.S. was declared malaria free in 1951; the disease was essentially eliminated throughout the Western world around that same time. After that, funding for research was drastically cut, and malaria was all but forgotten in most wealthy nations.

Yet outside these countries it remains an ever-present challenge. **THE BATTLE TO BEAT MALARIA** takes viewers to Tanzania, where nine out of ten people live in the country’s malaria zone. And it is the youngest children, far less able to fight off infection, who are most at risk. Across the country — and much of the African continent — malaria costs lives and affects livelihoods, undermining the potential of entire generations. Viewers are introduced to malaria researchers from the Ifakara Health Institute who are working on the country’s medical frontline. Other key members of the team are based at the University Of Oxford, where they found earlier success with the Oxford/AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine. They have been working for the last 13 years on a malaria vaccine called R21/Matrix M.

"It was an immense privilege to be given the opportunity to tell the story of the incredible team of scientists behind the development of a new malaria vaccine,” said **Producer/Director for Wingspan Productions** **Catherine Gale**. “Their commitment and resilience, against the odds, is deeply inspiring and their remarkable achievement serves as a powerful reminder that science can and does have the power to change and in this case save millions of lives. We are thrilled to be honored with this award by the AAAS."

R21’s goal is to activate the body’s immune defenses so they are ready to attack the parasite at its most vulnerable moment: just after it enters our blood. During this narrow window, most individuals’ immune responses are not prepared to defeat the parasite. But the parasite does have an Achilles’ heel. In order to invade the liver, it relies on a coating called the circumsporozoite protein (CSP). The R21 vaccine is built from CSP protein, inducing the body to produce an army of antibodies designed to neutralize the parasite. R21’s predecessor — a pioneering vaccine called RTS,S — uses the same strategy. RTS,S was approved for use in 2021 — the very first malaria vaccine to gain W.H.O. approval. But so far supply has been limited, and it is relatively expensive to produce.

**THE BATTLE TO BEAT MALARIA** explores the years of painstaking lab work that led to a vaccine design yielding promising antibody responses and early trials reporting remarkable protection against malaria; first in mice and later in healthy adults. It documents a clinical trial in very young Tanzanian children from the perspective of their families — and the scientists who are racing to protect them. Cameras roll, capturing moments of high emotion through the final trial phases. The largest of these, a $20 million effort to vaccinate nearly 5,000 children, yielded impressive results: R21 was between 68% and 75% effective in preventing clinical malaria cases, upholding earlier evidence that it is the first malaria vaccine to meet W.H.O. targets for the year 2030.

The film also takes viewers to the Serum Institute of India, the largest vaccine manufacturer in the world and the project’s key trials and production partner. In a high-stakes bet, the Institute commits to producing tens of millions of doses of the new, low-cost vaccine, even before W.H.O. approval. Meanwhile, researchers are racing to provide W.H.O. with the data that could secure that approval.

Finally, the news that the team has been awaiting arrives: the W.H.O. has approved R21 for use in children, triggering the release of critical donor funds and opening the door to its intended rollout in 2024. The filmmakers capture the emotional reactions of the researchers and scientists. They know that this vaccine could offer a lifeline for millions.

The 2024 AAAS Kavli Science Journalism Award winners were announced on Wednesday, November 13

2024. The full list of winners is [here](https://bit.ly/3CjFvu1).

**THE BATTLE TO BEAT MALARIA** is available for streaming at [**pbs.org/nova**](https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/video/the-battle-to-beat-malaria/)and on the [**PBS App**](https://www.pbs.org/pbs-video-app/), available on iOS, Android, Roku streaming devices, Apple TV, Android TV, Amazon Fire TV, Samsung Smart TV, Chromecast and VIZIO. PBS station members can view many series, documentaries and specials via [PBS Passport](https://www.pbs.org/passport/videos/). For more information about PBS Passport, visit the [PBS Passport FAQ](https://help.pbs.org/support/solutions/5000121793) website.

**THE BATTLE TO BEAT MALARIA** is produced by UK-based independent production company WINGSPAN PRODUCTIONS and HHMI TANGLED BANK STUDIOS in association with NOVA/GBH and Arte France. It is produced and directed by Catherine Gale. Executive Producer for Wingspan Productions is Archie Baron. Executive Producers for HHMI Tangled Bank Studios are Jared Lipworth and Sean B. Carroll. Executive Producers for NOVA are Julia Cort and Chris Schmidt.

Original funding for **THE BATTLE TO BEAT MALARIA** was provided by Viking Cruises, the NOVA Science Trust, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and PBS viewers.

Funding for NOVA is provided by Carlisle Companies, the NOVA Science Trust, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and PBS viewers.

###

**About NOVA**

[NOVA](https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/?utm_source=promourl&utm_medium=direct&utm_campaign=nova_2019) is the most popular primetime science series on American television, demystifying the scientific and technological concepts that shape and define our lives, our planet, and our universe. The PBS series is also one of the most widely distributed science programs around the world, and is a multimedia, multiplatform brand reaching more than 55 million Americans every year on TV and online. NOVA’s important and inspiring stories of human ingenuity, exploration, and the quest for knowledge are regularly recognized with the industry’s most prestigious awards. As part of its mission to make the scientific enterprise accessible to all, NOVA is committed to diversity, equity, inclusion in all its work, from the production process to the range of stories we tell and the voices we amplify. In addition, science educators across the country rely on NOVA for resources used in the classroom as well as in museums, libraries, and after-school programs. NOVA is a production of GBH; more information can be found at [pbs.org/nova](https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/?utm_source=promourl&utm_medium=direct&utm_campaign=nova_2019), or by following NOVA on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjHz5SVHeMT0AViCYZvsGDA), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/NOVApbs/), [TikTok](https://www.tiktok.com/%40novapbs?lang=en), or [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/novapbs/?hl=en).

**About PBS**

[PBS](http://www.pbs.org/), with more than 330 member stations, offers all Americans the opportunity to explore new ideas and new worlds through television and digital content. Each month, PBS reaches over 36 million adults on linear primetime television, more than 16 million users on PBS-owned streaming platforms, 53 million viewers on YouTube, and 60 million people view PBS content on social media, inviting them to experience the worlds of science, history, nature, and public affairs and to take front-row seats to world-class drama and performances. PBS’s broad array of programs has been consistently honored by the industry’s most coveted award competitions. Teachers of children from pre-K through 12th grade turn to [PBS LearningMedia](http://pbslearningmedia.org/) for digital content and services that help bring classroom lessons to life. As the number one educational media brand, [PBS KIDS](http://pbskids.org/) helps children 2-8 build critical skills, enabling them to find success in school and life. Delivered through member stations, PBS KIDS offers high-quality content on TV — including a PBS KIDS channel — and streaming free on [pbskids.org](http://pbskids.org/)and the [PBS KIDS Video app](https://pbskids.org/apps/pbs-kids-video.html), games on the [PBS KIDS Games app](https://pbskids.org/apps/pbs-kids-games.html), and in communities across America. More information about PBS is available at [PBS.org](http://pbs.org/), one of the leading dot-org websites on the internet, [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/pbs), [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/pbs/?hl=en), or through our [apps for mobile and connected devices](http://www.pbs.org/anywhere/home/). Specific program information and updates for press are available at [pbs.org/pressroom](http://pressroom.pbs.org/) or by following [PBS Communications on X.](https://twitter.com/PBS_PR)

**About GBH**

GBH is the leading multiplatform creator for public media in America. As the largest producer of content for PBS and partner to NPR and PRX, GBH delivers compelling experiences, stories and information to audiences wherever they are. GBH produces digital and broadcast programming that engages, illuminates and inspires, through drama and science, history, arts, culture and journalism. It is the creator of such signature programs as MASTERPIECE, ANTIQUES ROADSHOW, FRONTLINE, NOVA, AMERICAN EXPERIENCE, *Arthur* and *Molly of Denali,* as well as WORLD Channel and a catalog of streaming series, podcasts and on-demand video. With studios and a newsroom headquartered in Boston, GBH reaches across New England with GBH 89.7, Boston’s Local NPR®; CRB Classical 99.5; and CAI, the Cape and Islands NPR® station. Dedicated to making media accessible to and inclusive of our diverse culture, GBH is a pioneer in delivering media to those who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind and visually impaired. GBH creates curriculum-based digital content for educators nationwide with PBS LearningMedia and has been recognized with hundreds of the nation’s premier broadcast, digital and journalism awards. Find more information at [wgbh.org](https://www.wgbh.org/).

**About HHMI Tangled Bank Studios**

 HHMI Tangled Bank Studios is a mission-driven production company that seeks to shine a light on some of the most significant scientific challenges and breakthroughs of our time. Recent films include ***Blue Carbon***, ***Every Little Thing, Wild Hope, Hunt for the Oldest DNA, Wilding***, ***Blue Whales: Return of the Giants***, and Oscar-nominated ***All That Breathes***, the only film to win best documentary at both the Sundance and Cannes film festivals. Other notable films include Emmy Award-winners ***The Serengeti Rules*** and ***The Farthest – Voyager In Space***; Emmy-nominated ***My Garden of a Thousand Bees, Battle to Beat Malaria,*** and ***Nature’s Fear Factor***; and Peabody Award winner ***Inventing Tomorrow***. To extend the reach and impact of each film, the studio undertakes educational and public outreach efforts in partnership with purpose-focused organizations. For more information, please visit [WWW.TANGLEDBANKSTUDIOS.ORG](http://www.tangledbankstudios.org).

**About Wingspan Productions**

WINGSPAN PRODUCTIONS is a multi-award winning independent production company specializing in factual content based in London, UK. Founded by Archie Baron in 2008, Wingspan has made documentaries and series across the factual genres to all the major UK broadcasters, and many US and international partners. Its projects tend to be innovative and ambitious as well as highly entertaining and have been recognised with Rose D’Or, Prix Italia, Grierson, RTS, Broadcast, AFO, Impact Docs and Sandford St Martin Awards as well as being three times BAFTA nominated. Recent titles range from the international feature documentary ***Vaccine: The Inside Story*** (known as ***Race for the Vaccine*** in the USA) to environmental ice skating Alaskan spectacular ***Dancing on Thin Ice with Torvill & Dean***; arts portrait ***Quentin Blake: The Drawing of My Life***, urgent history in ***Ian Hislop’s Fake News***; the mind-expanding six volume series ***The Joy of…*** on every aspect of maths, the madcap AI-Musical Theatre experiment ***Computer Says Show*** and the unique and historic joyous celebration of ***Our Gay Wedding: The Musical***.

###

**Press Contacts:**

Jordan Lawrence

DKC Public Relations

jordan\_lawrence@dkcnews.com

212.981.5220

Jennifer Welsh

NOVA/GBH

jennifer\_welsh@wgbh.org

978.985.9835