

CARLOS JUAN FINLAY

(1833-1915)

Subject: Mosquitos

Field: Epidemiology

Nationality: Cuban

Entomologist
of the
Month



The mosquito *Aedes aegypti*, which is the most common vector for yellow fever. Credit: [CDC Website](#)

In 1881, Carlos Juan Finlay presented his theory that mosquitos vectored the disease yellow fever at the Royal Academy of Medical, Physical and Natural Sciences in Havana, Cuba. Though his presentation was met with skepticism and dismissal by his peers, he continued to publish on the subject, and recommended that mosquito populations be managed in order to control the spread of the disease. Finlay's hypothesis was eventually confirmed in 1900 by the Yellow Fever Commission, under the direction of the American researcher Walter Reed, who was tasked with understanding the disease which impacted construction of the Panama Canal. Though Reed has historically received much of the credit for beating yellow fever, he himself acknowledged Finlay's contributions and cited Finlay's papers in his own articles. Since his monumental discovery, Finlay has been commemorated in numerous ways, including the naming of the United Nation's UNESCO Carlos J. Finlay Prize for Microbiology in his honor. In his home country of Cuba, Finlay's legacy lives on in the Finlay Medical History Museum of Havana, the Carlos J. Finlay Military Hospital, the Finlay Institute for Vaccines, and the creation of the National Order of Merit Carlos J. Finlay Award, which is the highest medical decoration awarded by the Cuban Council of State.

References:

- Faerstein, E. and Winkelstein, W. J. (2010). Carlos Juan Finlay: Rejected, Respected, and Right. *Epidemiology* 21, 158.
- This factsheet was produced by Staci Cibotti, Penn State Center for Pollinator Research Graduate Student

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