

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (1) in DH SEB CD/8/97/1

18 January 2016

Dear Doctor,

Vigilance against Zika virus infection

We would like to draw your attention to the ongoing transmission of Zika virus in Central and South America and the Caribbean.

Zika virus infection is a mosquito-borne disease caused by Zika virus. It is primarily transmitted to humans through bites from *Aedes* mosquitos. The incubation period is typically between 3 and 12 days. Approximately one in four people infected with Zika virus will develop symptoms including mild fever, rash, muscle pain, joint pain, headache, retro-orbital pain and conjunctivitis which last for a few days. There is no specific medication for the disease and symptomatic treatment is given to relief discomfort. Most people recover fully without severe complications.

According to the latest report by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)/ World Health Organization (WHO), autochthonous transmission of Zika virus was reported from epidemiological week 17 of 2015 to epidemiological week 2 of 2016 in the following countries and territories in the Americas Region: Brazil, Columbia, Ecuador, El Salvador, French Guiana, Guyana, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Martinique, Mexico, Panama, Puerto Rico, Paraguay, Saint Martin, Suriname and Venezuela.



There have reports of microcephaly and other poor pregnancy outcomes in babies of mothers who were infected with Zika virus while pregnant. Research is being done to determine what effects Zika virus can have on foetuses. On 28 November 2015, the Ministry of Health of Brazil established a relationship

between an increase in cases of microcephaly in newborns and Zika virus infections in the country's northeast. According to a preliminary analysis of research carried out by Brazilian authorities, the greatest risk of microcephaly and malformations appears to be associated with infection during the first trimester of pregnancy. Health authorities, with support from PAHO/WHO and other agencies, are conducting research to clarify the cause, risk factors and consequences of microcephaly.

While pending the outcome of these studies, the Centre for Health Protection (CHP), Department of Health recommends the following special precautions for pregnant women and women trying to become pregnant:-

- Pregnant women should consider postponing travel to the areas where Zika virus transmission is ongoing. Pregnant women who must travel to one of these areas should talk to their doctor or other healthcare provider first and strictly follow steps to avoid mosquito bites during the trip; and
- Women trying to become pregnant should consult with their healthcare provider before travelling to these areas and strictly follow steps to prevent mosquito bites during the trip.

In Hong Kong, the principal vector, *Aedes aegypti*, is not found but *Aedes albopictus* is widely present so there is risk of secondary spread for imported infections. At present, there is no vaccine to prevent Zika virus infection. To prevent the disease, members of the public are reminded to protect themselves from mosquito bites and help prevent their proliferation.

Medical practitioners should be aware of the possibility of Zika virus infection for travellers returning from affected areas and present with clinically compatible picture. Laboratory testing for Zika virus infection is available at the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch (PHLSB) of CHP. Please contact PHLSB for further information as necessary.

If you encounter patients with laboratory confirmed Zika virus infection please report to the Central Notification Office (CENO) of CHP via fax (2477 2770), CENO On-line (https://cdis.chp.gov.hk/CDIS_CENO_ONLINE/ceno.html) or phone (2477 2772) for investigation and control measures.

For updated travel health information on Zika virus transmission, please visit the following website of Travel Health Service at: <http://www.travelhealth.gov.hk/eindex.html>.

Please draw the attention of the healthcare professionals and supporting staff in your institution/ working with you to the above. Thank you for your continuous support in combating infectious diseases.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S K Chuang', written in a cursive style.

(Dr S K CHUANG)

for Controller, Centre for Health Protection
Department of Health