

ZIKA VIRUS ALERT

Calgary, February 8th 2016

A Zika virus disease epidemic has been reported over the last few weeks in countries of the South-American continent and in the Caribbean. Two more cases have recently been reported in Texas and Ireland.

This virus belongs to the same group as dengue and chikungunya and is transmitted to people through the same mosquito. The infected Aedes mosquito seems to be the main transmission vector although the possibility of direct transmission between people cannot be totally excluded.

This infection causes fever, skin rash and muscle or joint pain. It is usually benign and not all people develop symptoms of the disease. However, neurological complications can be noted for some patients.

These complications can even include Guillain-Barré syndrome for which the main symptoms are significant weakness in muscles which may lead to paralysis after extreme fatigue. This syndrome is usually reversible after several weeks in an intensive care unit.

The most serious long-term complication is the transmission of the virus from mother to baby during pregnancy. The fetus will suffer from many consequences such as significant microcephaly with important intellectual disability, joint pain in the lower limbs which may prevent the child from walking.

There is no specific medicine, preventive treatment or vaccine currently available.

Prevention involves avoiding mosquito bites by wearing long-sleeved shirts and trousers, using repellents and sleeping under mosquito nets.

Women who are pregnant or likely to be pregnant are strongly advised not to travel to countries in Latin America or the Caribbean.

For more information, please visit the World Health Organization website - <https://lnkd.in/eSUxFwD> - or contact our Customer Care Center at +1 (403) 537 8823.