



INDIAN COUNCIL OF MEDICAL RESEARCH

Department of Health Research – Ministry of Health & Family Welfare
Government of India

Press Release

Modification of CDC (USA) travel advisory on Zika virus disease

1st April 2019, New Delhi

Between September to November 2018, India witnessed outbreaks of Zika virus disease in Jaipur as well as Bhopal and its neighbouring districts in Madhya Pradesh. Both the outbreaks were effectively contained through prompt public health interventions. No fresh cases of Zika virus disease have been reported from both the States since end of November 2018.

However, in December 2018 Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, USA issued a Travel health notice on Zika virus in India. The travel advisory depicted that India has an ongoing outbreak of Zika virus disease in Rajasthan and its surrounding States. The advisory further cautioned pregnant women not to travel to areas with ongoing Zika outbreaks. Women planning pregnancy were also alerted on travel. Such an advisory could have serious implications on travel and trade in India.

Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of India expressed serious concern over the whole issue. Prof. Balram Bhargava, Secretary Department of Health Research & Director General, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) wrote to CDC to withdraw or modify the travel advisory providing evidence of the contained outbreak in India. This communication provided data on human and vector surveillance for Zika virus disease in India.

The communication was successful in ensuring modification of the travel advisory on 27th March 2019. The status of India has now been changed from “ongoing outbreak” to “current or past transmission but no current outbreak”.

Zika virus strain isolated from Rajasthan matches with the Brazilian Zika strain associated with outbreaks, and microcephaly/congenital Zika syndrome (CZS); ICMR-NIV Pune has initiated mice/animal studies to understand the potential of this virus to cause microcephaly or CZS. Preliminary reports suggest the absence of one known mutation linked with

microcephaly. However, further characterization of the strain is required as microcephaly/CZS has several attributable causes.

ICMR has also initiated a study to understand the outcomes of pregnancy of women infected with Zika and also the occurrence of CZS as well as other neurological malformations in their newborns. The study is being rolled out in Rajasthan in first week of April and in Bhopal by end of April. Attempts are also being made to expedite the Phase II Zika vaccine clinical trials of Bharat Biotech International Ltd.

Human surveillance for Zika virus disease in India will be continued. As of now, no cases of Zika virus disease are being reported from any part of the country.

With regards,

Syed Adil Shamim Andrabi
Information Interface Officer/PRO
Indian Council of Medical Research-
Department of Health Research
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
proicmr@gmail.com, syed.adil@icmr.gov.in
Ext. 286, Phone. 26589130

Dr. Nivedita Gupta
Scientist 'E' (ECD)
Indian Council of Medical
Research, New Delhi
Phone. 26589397
Extn. 257