

1 ZONOTIC AND VECTOR-BORNE DISEASES

b Zika virus no longer a 'Public Health Emergency of International Concern'

The World Health Organization Emergency Committee on Zika and microcephaly convened for the fifth meeting under the International Health Regulations (2005) on 18 November 2016. The committee rescinded the status of the Zika virus outbreak and associated neurological complications as a 'Public Health Emergency of International Concern' (PHEIC). Although there is no longer a PHEIC, the committee recognized that the situation remains a public health challenge that can be addressed by sustained, well resourced research programmes and public health interventions. Countries at risk of Zika virus introduction need to remain vigilant. Travellers to Zika-affected areas including pregnant women, or women wishing to conceive, should remain aware of risks, and apply measures to prevent being bitten by mosquitoes.

The WHO reports that cases of congenital Zika syndrome have been reported from Cabo Verde (Africa), Marshall Islands (Western Pacific Ocean Region) and Thailand. Vietnam reported its first case in November 2016. Canada, Europe (Spain and Slovenia) and USA have reported travel-related microcephaly. The magnitude of the risk for Zika virus infection associated malformations remains largely unknown at present due to both uncertainty about the risk associated with different strains and the prevalence of immunity to Zika in different populations.

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