

## LETTER

## Zika: another sexually transmitted infection?

Zika virus is an *Aedes*-borne virus (Flaviviridae family), identified in 1947 in monkey rhesus sera in Uganda and in 1954 in humans.<sup>1 2</sup> It was considered endemic in Africa and South West Asia. After 2007, outbreaks in Yap State, Micronesia and French Polynesia have been of high relevance.<sup>2</sup> In 2014–2015 it has also begun to be of importance in the Americas, with outbreaks in Eastern Islands, Chile and more recently in Brazil (17 confirmed cases up to 30 May 2015).

Recently, perinatal, transplacental transmission of Zika during childbirth and possibly by blood transfusion have also been reported.<sup>3 4</sup> During the last few years concern has been raised due to the suspicion that this virus has also been transmitted sexually.<sup>5 6</sup> It was reported in contaminated semen from a patient in Tahiti, French Polynesia at the time of an outbreak there (2013).<sup>5</sup> Semen contaminated with the virus was also found in a patient in Colorado, USA, who recently went to Senegal, presenting symptoms of infection.<sup>6</sup> Four days later, his wife, who had not left USA in years, began to present symptoms of the infection.<sup>6</sup> Both patients had hematospermia.<sup>5 6</sup>

Zika virus RNA has also been detected in serum, saliva and urine.<sup>7 8</sup> Although it is clear that more studies are necessary to confirm these findings, they support the hypothesis that Zika virus can be sexually transmitted.<sup>7 8</sup>

In the Americas, where *Aedes* infestation is high, transmitting dengue for decades, and since 2014 also chikungunya, primary transmission of Zika is highly expected but also sexual transmission is of concern. These considerations are of importance in regions of the world where Zika is endemic. Finally, vector-borne disease programmes are needed in collaboration with integrated strategies for sexual health and sexually transmitted infection programmes to achieve integrated control of this potentially new sexually transmitted infection.

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