

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**Chikungunya and Zika in Huila: Mapping their Incidence in a Neglected Area of Colombia**

To the Editor,

As we have previously discussed (1), chikungunya (CHIKV) has been neglected in countries such as Mexico and Bolivia (2). But even in countries severely affected by CHIKV and also Zika (ZIKV), such as Colombia (3), there are areas with high incidence of cases of such arboviral diseases, with a lack of studies about their occurrence. We would like to take this opportunity to show our analyses about the assessment of CHIKV and ZIKV in Huila, Colombia, a neglected area on published studies on these arboviral diseases, during 2014–2017.

Huila is one of the 32 departments of Colombia, with a population of 1,182,985 inhabitants (2017). It is located in the southwest of the country, and its capital is Neiva (345,911 pop.). During 2014–2016, a total of 31704 cases of CHIKV occurred, reaching an incidence rate of 2510.04 cases/100,000 pop. in 2016 (Figure 1), especially concentrated in the northcentral capital area, where Neiva, the capital city, is located. In 2016, ZIKV arrived at Huila and affected all the 37 municipalities of this department with a total of 7046 cases. Five municipalities had >1000 cases/100,000 pop., including the capital (Figure 1). Both arboviruses significantly affected Neiva across their 10 urban areas (communes), CHIKV especially in 2015 and ZIKV in 2016. Despite that, in 2017, city sustained transmission of both arboviruses.

As suggested before, the incidence of arboviral diseases would be linked to climatic and social factors. Most affected areas of Huila have climatic-prone conditions for transmission, such as temperature and rainfall (Figure 1), but also those with vulnerable social conditions (3). Data derived from these maps can be used to guide decisions for prevention and control of emerging health problems. Undoubtedly, arboviruses represent a significant issue in the region and the country. And these maps should be used for counseling of travelers who should be aware of the risk of infective mosquito biting (4).

Given the ecoepidemiological conditions of the department and particularly of the northcentral municipalities, these are becoming now endemic for CHIKV and ZIKV. Public health policies and strategies, considering these conditions, for integral control of arboviral diseases in people

living, but also in travelers, in these areas, should be developed and urgently implemented. Finally, this would be applicable to other emerging arboviruses, pending to come, such as Mayaro and Oropouche.

References

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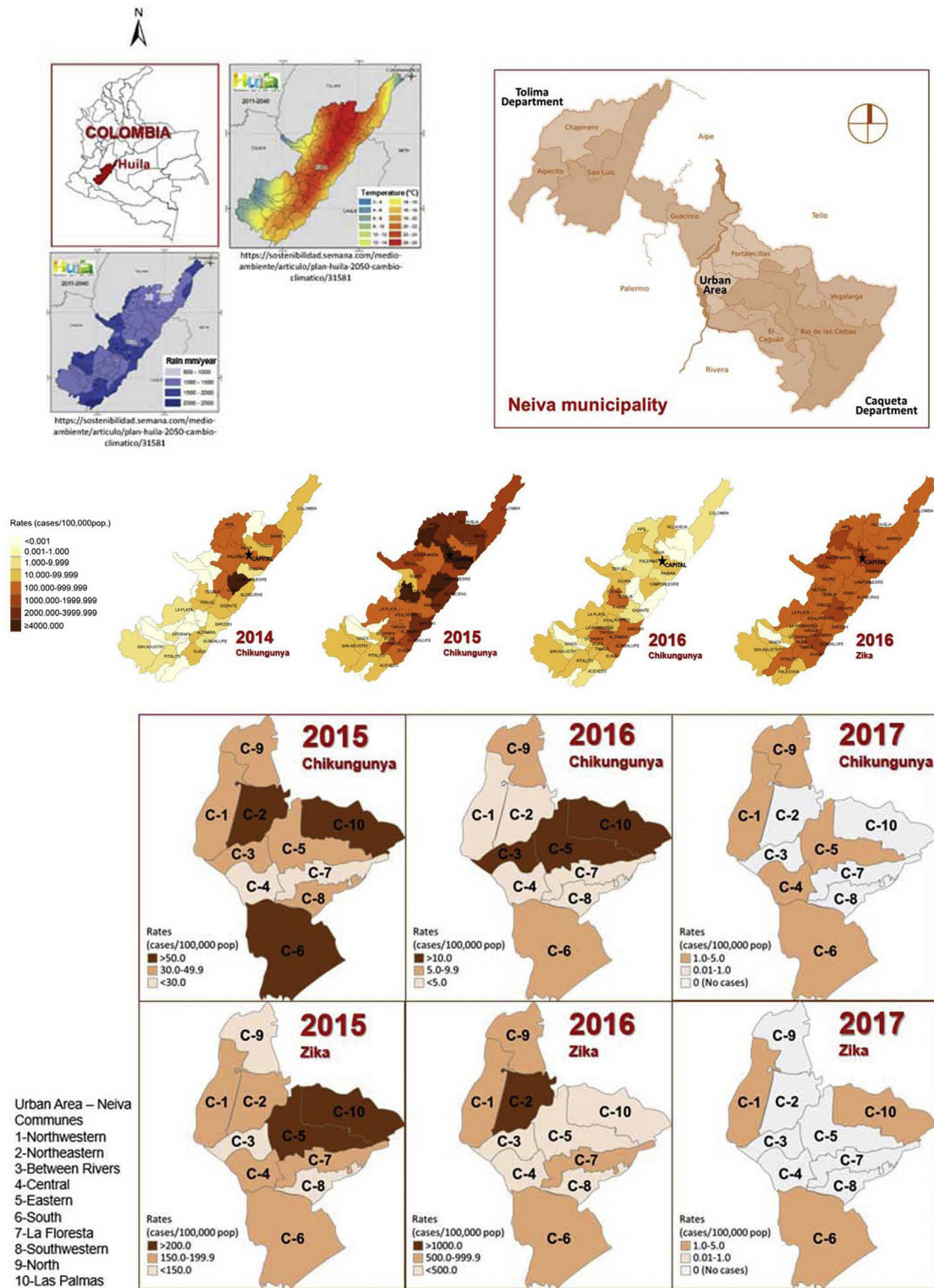


Figure 1. Geographic distribution of CHIKV and ZIKV incidence rates (cases/100,000 pop.) in the Huila department, Colombia, 2014-2016, including Neiva, 2015-2017.