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## A History of the Zika Virus

For its fearful spread and devastating outcomes, the Zika virus disease has made recent international news. Decades ago, the virus originated in the Zika forest in central Uganda, but the virus' modern resurfacing far overwhelms the 1947 outbreak that brought about its discovery. The Zika virus is infamous for its unpreventable means of infection, its incurability, and its calamitous, irreversible effects. Spread by the mere bite of an infected Aedes mosquito, the Zika virus results in malformations of newborns. Infants who are infected with the Zika virus often develop what is called microcephaly, or small heads. Another factor that makes the Zika virus so alarming is the vast distance that it has covered. Over the last seventy years, it has spread from the continent of Africa, to Asia, to South America, parts of Europe, and North America. This makes the Zika virus a pandemic, or worldwide phenomenon. With cases more prevalent in the last three years, it is important to know exactly why this virus is concerning, how it affects different patients, and how it may be prevented in the future.

A recent outbreak of the Zika virus began in 2015. Since 2015, there have been 5,658 cases of Zika in the United States of America alone. On a global scale, the number of the affected is far too high to keep track of. The high morbidity rate is most likely caused by Zika being so effortlessly transmissible. Whether it be contracted from the virtually unnoticeable bite of a mosquito, through sexual contact with someone who has been bit, or from an infected mother to offspring, it is difficult to prevent the contraction of the Zika virus, allowing it to affect thousands with ease. Its high infectious rate makes it a cause for concern for the entire human race living in all parts of the world. Anyone and everyone is at risk for infection. Also concerning is the lack of a cure. Not only is the Zika virus hard to prevent, easy to contract, and causing devastating microcephaly, but it is also incurable. Only treatments for its minor symptoms, such as fever, fatigue, rash, and joint and muscle pain, are available.

The Zika virus, however, does not have the same effects on everyone that is infected by it. Therefore, not every patient of the Zika virus should be treated the same. Four out of five people that are infected with the Zika virus show no symptoms; thus, these people are often never aware that they were ever infected by the virus. Symptoms of the Zika virus usually occur between two to seven days after the victims have been bitten by an infected mosquito. Those who do develop symptoms are often mild and they do not need to be hospitalized. As long as those infected get plenty of rest and fluids in their bodies, the disease will not get worse and they will be cured of their symptoms in a week. If needed, they can take medications such as Ibuprofen or acetaminophen to relieve pain. The Zika virus for the most part is not really a cause for concern since it is quite uncommon that people with Zika need to go to the hospital and it is rare for people to die from the Zika virus. Those who end up being patients at the hospital do

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warrant some concern. Physically, they are no longer able to cope with the virus themselves and have to rely on trained professionals to ensure their symptoms do not get any worse. Those who do succumb to the Zika virus often had underlying illnesses and risk factors that contributed to their demise. Although it is rare, it still is entirely possible for a fatal outcome to occur from the Zika virus. The Zika virus especially poses a threat to pregnant women and their babies, as well as to the elderly. Thus, treatments need to be developed to wipe out the threat of the Zika virus and ensure the safety of the human race.

As of right now, there are no medications directly aimed to fight against the Zika virus. Currently, there are no known vaccines for the Zika virus that can protect humans from getting it. The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), however, are working to develop multiple vaccines to prevent the Zika virus. The NIAID's Vaccine Research Center (VCR) has developed a DNA-based vaccine. When this vaccine was tested back in 2016, it was only in its first phase. Initial findings showed that the vaccine is indeed safe and can induce a neutralizing antibody to fight against the Zika virus. As of 2017, the vaccine is still in phase one of the experiment where it takes healthy adults and adolescents from known areas where the Zika virus is and injecting them with the vaccine. In addition, there is an attempt to produce a live-attenuated vaccine, that is a vaccine based on the use of a weakened form of the virus itself. The attenuated vaccine is currently being studied in Brazil at the stage 3 phase. Researchers are still testing these vaccines and have yet to determine if they can effectively prevent the Zika virus in a human being. Not only are they working to develop a DNA-based vaccine and an attenuated vaccine, but they are also working to develop alternative vaccines that can possibly prevent the Zika virus. The NIAID developed a purified inactivated Zika vaccine as well as many others. All of their vaccines are currently in their trial periods and have yet to be perfected before being released to the general public. Once the trials are completed and the vaccines are determined to be effective, the Zika virus will no longer be a concern to the human race.

Since the Zika virus is of such concern for the entire world population and its treatments may vary, finding a preventative vaccination is of high priority. It is important for all to understand the Zika virus' devastation and to stay informed on new treatments and possible cures. This virus can cause trouble for people on all continents as it can infect people through travelling mosquitos or contact with an infected human being. It is also hard to detect if a person is carrying the virus, since many Zika victims do not display any symptoms. This also contributes to the spreading of the virus. Although dying from the Zika virus is quite rare, it still can cause trouble for those infected by it. Thus, a vaccine for the virus is needed to prevent further spread of the disease and to prevent any complications in the future.

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