Zika Virus: Update and Dissemination of WHO Technical Resources in the Post-Epidemic Era

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Abstract

The epidemic of Zika virus (ZIKV) and its associated complications was first identified in Brazil in 2015, and spread rapidly throughout the Americas and beyond. In response, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared ZIKV infection and associated congenital and neurologic complications a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) in February 2016. WHO rapidly responded to the outbreak of this emerging pathogen with global coordination of partners, and development of a comprehensive array of resources to guide clinical diagnosis, management, and public health response.

Information on ZIKV transmission and disease continued to accumulate after the PHEIC officially ended in November 2016. Consequently, WHO guidance documents produced during the 2015-2016 outbreak were in need of review and update to accurately reflect this growing body of evidence. Furthermore, the rapid accumulation of documents during the emergency response warranted review, collation, and organization of the WHO website for improved accessibility.

As part of my internship, all ZIKV guidance documents were reviewed and catalogued. Guidance documents and reports were systematically disseminated to WHO technical leads and tracked to ensure information was updated. The WHO ZIKV website was reorganized to broadly capture all relevant WHO technical resources through a single, organized portal. These activities were a critical component to transform the WHO Zika program from an emergency response to a long-term program, and to ensure dissemination of accurate and up-to-date information to the global health community.

This work underscores the critical importance of sustained attention to ZIKV and other emerging pathogens in the inter-epidemic period, when there is the continued need to track transmission, build national capacity for preparedness and response, and advance development of diagnostics and vaccines. Sustained vigilance and investment in these areas is needed to help minimize future outbreaks and improve care for affected patients, families, and communities.

This abstract is based on the information obtained during an internship at WHO from April 2018 to July 2018 (CW). The authors alone are responsible for the views expressed in this abstract. These views do not necessarily represent the decisions or policies of the World Health Organization.