

HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES – June 2, 2016

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Steve Simon (Chair), Mitchell Glenn (Asst. Chair), Daryl Cochrane, Wanda Garcia, Andrea Kornbluth, Elizabeth Lehmann, Javier Trejo. **ABSENT:** Beatrice Hall (Public Member).

OTHER BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Shahabuddeen Ally, Mary Anderson, Maria Luna.

GUESTS: About 50-60 people.

COMMUNITY FORUM ON THE ZIKA VIRUS

This was a special meeting of the committee, which co-hosted a community forum held by Columbia University Medical Center (CUMC) on the Zika virus at the Russ Berrie Medical Science Pavilion, 1150 St. Nicholas Ave. There were four speakers, whose presentations are summarized below. The moderator was Ross Frommer, Vice President – Government & Community Affairs, CUMC. Mitchell Glenn, the Assistant Chair of the committee, spoke briefly to emphasize the importance of this forum to the community board and the community as a whole.

1. Dr. Kiran Thakur, Assistant Professor, Department of Neurology, CUMC ktt21125@columbia.edu

- The Aedes Aegypti mosquito is the only organism that transmits the Zika virus. It was originally found in Central and South America and in the Caribbean. It is similar to the Dengue virus in that it is caused by a mosquito bite, affects mothers and unborn children, and can be spread through sexual contact and blood transfusions.
- It was initially discovered in 1947 in Uganda. It remained fairly dormant until it was discovered on the island of Yap in the South Pacific in 2007.
- By 2013-14, there were 28,000 cases mostly in French Polynesia. Since then 60 countries have been affected. There are currently 591 cases in the US – all travel-related. Of these, 109 are in NY.
- There are 2,443 cases suspected in the Dominican Republic, 187 of which were identified last week. Of the 2,443 cases, 243 are pregnant women.
- Zika affects the brains in fetuses and the neurological systems in adults. It causes inflammation in the brain and spinal cord.
- Chikungunya and Dengue viruses, also carried by mosquitoes, have symptoms similar to Zika.

2. Dr. Rafael Tokarz, Assistant Research Scientist, Center for Infection & Immunity, Mailman School of Public Health, CUMC rtt2449@cumc.columbia.edu

- Works at a research laboratory that is looking for the causes of the Zika virus.
- The first sign of infection in human beings was in 1954.
- Zika is one of many arbovirus-borne viruses – called arboviruses. There are about two million cases each year.
- Chikungunya originated in Asia and Africa and came to the Americas in 2013.
- Dengue originated in the tropics and subtropics and infects about 400 million people each year.
- The Aedes Aegypti mosquito transmits all these diseases.
- It is difficult to differentiate between Zika and Dengue; it requires a molecular test.
- Serologic tests are required to look for the pathogens (proteins).
- The Center for Infection & Immunity is doing the following:
 - Developing a PCR test to detect Zika and differentiate it from Dengue, Chikungunya and West Nile viruses.
 - Developing serologic tests to identify the antibodies specific to the given viruses.
 - Testing the mosquito population in NYC in conjunction with the four viruses identified above.

3. Dr. Dyan Summers, RN, MPD, DNP, NP-C, MPH, CTM, Jonas Center Scholar, Columbia University School of Nursing Alumna

- Has worked extensively in travel and tropical medicine and for the Epidemic Investigation Service
- No known treatment for Zika. All you can do is manage the symptoms with Tylenol and Benadryl.
- Check the CDC website for regular updates.
- The incubation period for one who has unprotected sex is typically 2 to 12 days but can be up to 6 months.

4. Ricky Wong, Director of Community Affairs, NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene
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- 80% of those who are bitten by the Aedes Aegypti mosquito do not get sick.
- The Aedes Aegypti mosquito has not been observed in the New York area as of yet.
- The Aedes Albopictus mosquito, a cousin, does exist in NYC and can carry Zika.
- The NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene is treating standing pools of water with larvicide to eliminate pockets of mosquitoes.
- There has been no local transmission of Zika in the US. All cases are travel-related.
- Individuals should use DEET when outside to protect themselves.
- The mosquito season in NYC is from April 1 to October 31.

A question and answer period followed.

Respectfully submitted, Betty Lehmann.