

The Virgin Islands Consortium

In Puerto Rico, 249 Confirmed Cases Of Zika; 25 Are Pregnant Women

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Puerto Rico health officials said on Friday that an additional 48 cases of the Zika virus were confirmed on the island last week, bringing the total number of residents affected to 249.

According to P.R.'s Health Secretary Ana Rius, three of the new cases are pregnant women and six people were hospitalized after contracting the virus -- a tropical disease that may lead to babies being born with abnormally small heads, and also causes paralysis in adults.

One patient is recovering from a paralyzing condition that has been linked to Zika known as Guillain-Barre syndrome, according to Ms. Rius. And of the 249 cases, 24 are pregnant women.

Ms. Rius said the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (C.D.C.) identified the insecticide Deltametrina as most effective against the Aedes aegypti mosquito that spreads the virus. Ms. Rius also called on the P.R. public to rid their communities of breeding grounds as efforts to curb the disease continue.

In the U.S. Virgin Islands, there have been 11 confirmed cases of Zika. The number, according to Department of Health officials, is expected to rise. However, D.O.H. has been waging an ongoing battle to keep numbers low.

“The Department of Health continues to test pregnant women without symptoms of Zika. As of this week, 358 samples have been received from pregnant women, of those 225 results are pending. Two were symptomatic and these were both confirmed as dengue,” stated Deputy Commissioner of Health Kimberly Jones in a press release issued last Tuesday.

Also last week, a company called [Vector Disease Control International](#) (V.D.C.I.) was selected by C.D.C. as part of a national vector control contract to carry out mosquito control programs in U.S. states and territories to aid in the control of Zika virus. The territory’s residents can expect to see V.D.C.I. crews out in the community beginning on Monday, March 21. V.D.C.I. will be hiring and training a small number of local staff; individuals interested in applying should call 340-626-1676.