

The role of primary care providers in management of zika virus infection

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Primary care (PC) centers have the responsibility of managing zika virus (ZV) infection. Such a responsibility should also be extended by the local health departments in communicating and coordinating prevention and control efforts with the PC settings. The infection in pregnancy may be associated with fetal microcephaly and other central nervous system abnormalities, and it has been linked with Guillain-Barre syndrome. Symptomatic ZV infection is typically mild and short-lived in most individuals. However, attention is required for travel-associated risks in women who are pregnant or who are planning a pregnancy. Primary health care professionals should be educated about the hallmark signs and symptoms of ZV infection and advise their patients about precautionary measures to take. The most common symptoms are fever, rash, joint pain and conjunctivitis and can also include muscle pain and headache. The PC providers should communicate with pregnant women for protecting themselves from mosquitoes and avoid traveling to regions where the ZV infection is endemic. Such a communication should extend

to men who travel to areas where the ZV is present or who have pregnant sexual partners should either abstain from sex or use condoms during sex. Currently, there is no vaccine or prophylactic treatment that is available. However, the first vaccine is in the pipeline and in addition to supportive treatment for ZV infections, PC providers play a pivotal role of communicating and educating the patients about prevention and control measures as well as the potential birth defects that could result from ZV infection.

Biography

Reza Nassiri is a member of Departments of Pharmacology and Toxicology, and, Family and Community Medicine at Michigan State University College of Osteopathic Medicine (MSUCOM). His academic and research interests focus on viruses without borders, HIV/AIDS & TB, prevention and control of infectious diseases, tropical diseases, community health, global health, and community-based public health interventions. Based on his extensive experience and expertise in viral diseases, he developed clinical research programs in Brazil, South Africa, Haiti, Dominican Republic and Mexico. The core foci of such programs are prevention, control, and intervention. He is the recipient of 2013 MSU International Diplomacy Award. He is a member of numerous national and international professional societies.

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