



CARIBBEAN PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY

Ethical Issues – Zika virus in the Caribbean

To limit the effects of any possible epidemic, good early communication, and adequate community engagement and collaboration are required. Our communication must therefore outline sufficient details for persons to realize its relevance to them individually before the onset of the illness within their country or community. And so – at the governmental level, good, helpful information about the zika virus and effective measures to minimize infection through eliminating mosquito breeding sites and measures to avoid being bitten by a mosquito – should occur. This helps to avoid confusion, mis-communication, and misunderstanding.

Further, as in every infectious disease, our relevant authorities should not downplay the risks – as this could lead to higher rates of preventable infections. Neither should we overstate the risks, as we would not want any panic or any lack of public trust occurring subsequently, as this can be long-lasting. It is always good to provide timely, adequate and appropriate information, as we are now doing. And so we are telling you of the nature of the disease, the types of interventions to be implemented, and the reasons for these interventions.

We should always have the proper balance and avoid politically polarizing positions on health matters. Further, our Caribbean countries have an obligation to reduce the risk of ill health that people might impose on each other within as well as across our borders. As a result, adequate and accurate recording of the number of cases as well as the distribution across the country are important matters that need reporting to the country as well as to CARPHA.