

Study: Dengue fever is underreported

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The American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene is concerned about the U.S. blood supply due to underreporting of dengue fever.

Dengue fever is a growing public health threat in tropical countries, as well as to travelers to destinations such as Thailand, Brazil and Puerto Rico.

The Northbrook, Ill., society said dengue, believed to infect millions of people annually in developing countries as well as causing some infections in Texas near the Mexican border, is usually transmitted by mosquitoes. But a recent study suggests the sometimes fatal disease might be transferred through the nation's blood supply.

Researchers believe dengue is grossly underreported in many countries. During 2004, 557,000 cases and 1,800 deaths were reported globally to the World Health Organization, but projected dengue infection was more than 8 million cases with nearly 20,000 deaths. In addition to underreporting, the lack of an accurate diagnostic test means some milder forms of dengue might be misdiagnosed as influenza, the study said.

The research is to be presented next month in Philadelphia during the organization's 56th annual meeting.

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