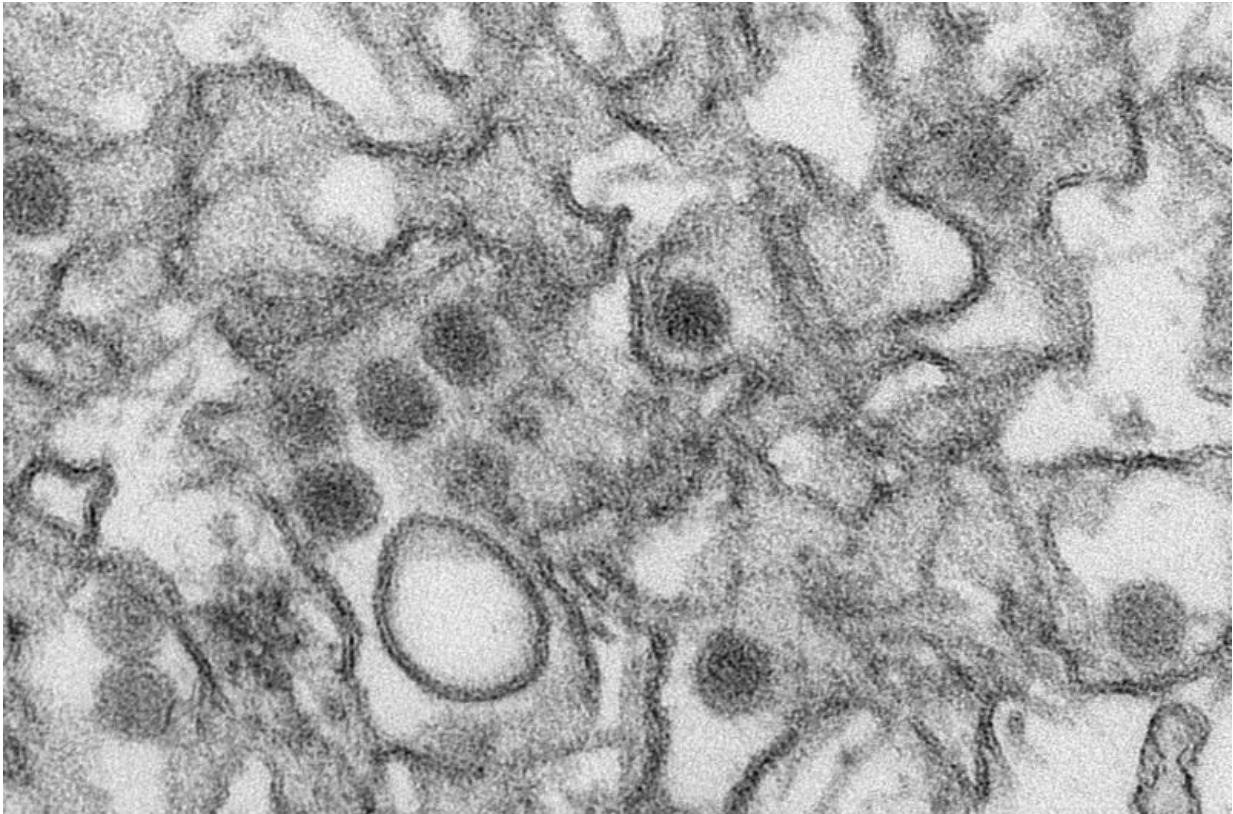


How to tackle the Zika virus

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Transmission electron micrograph (TEM) of Zika virus. Credit: Cynthia Goldsmith/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Health officials, drug companies, governments and the public are scrambling to understand and combat the Zika virus. The virus was first identified almost 70 years ago, but little is known about it. And now, officials suspect it could be related to a rise in microcephaly cases in

affected countries. An article in *Chemical & Engineering News* (C&EN), the weekly newsmagazine of the American Chemical Society, details the scientific challenges ahead.

Bethany Halford, a senior editor at C&EN, reports that officials face several obstacles when studying Zika, which is a flavivirus in the same family as dengue, yellow fever and West Nile virus. A major factor complicating efforts to track, diagnose and treat the virus is its stealth. Only 20 percent of people infected with it show symptoms, and doctors currently do not have an easy test approved by the Food and Drug Administration to prove someone is infected with Zika.

Pharmaceutical companies and the U.S. have quickly responded to the outbreak by ramping up vaccine research. Testing and approval could take three to five years, however. At the same time, some experts say this strategy, which focuses on an individual virus, does not make the most of available resources. They argue instead that scientists and [drug companies](#) should develop vaccines and therapies that target whole categories of viruses. In addition to addressing the current emergency, this broader approach could potentially help protect us against future outbreaks.

More information: Gearing Up to Fight Zika,
[cen.acs.org/articles/94/i8/Sci ... ents-Zika-Virus.html](http://cen.acs.org/articles/94/i8/Sci...ents-Zika-Virus.html)

Provided by American Chemical Society

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