

# First Zika virus death in France's Martinique: authorities (Update)

May 20 2016

---

The French Caribbean island of Martinique has suffered its first Zika virus-related death, the regional health agency said Friday.

"The patient, aged 84, had been hospitalised for 10 days in intensive care with Guillain Barre Syndrome (GBS)," the agency said, adding that the Zika link came to light late last week.

Some experts believe there is a link between Zika and GBS—in which the immune system attacks the nervous system.

Doctors tests found that "the death is directly linked to Zika with Guillain-Barre Syndrome associated with Zika as the initial cause," regional health authority ARS said.

"This death is the only one registered in Martinique since the start of the epidemic," the agency added.

Before the death, the French Caribbean overseas department had listed 19 patients as confirmed suffering from GBS, which has been linked with Zika, as has paralysis-causing myelitis.

Several cases of the virus have emerged from assumed GBS cases in Martinique's French Caribbean neighbour Guadeloupe as well as French Guyana.

Zika has been linked to birth defects and deaths in newborns amid

surging cases of neurological disorders and birth defects, notably in Brazil.

According to a World Health Organisation report earlier this year, more than 40 countries or territories have reported transmission of Zika within their borders since last year, and eight have reported an increase in Guillain-Barre cases.

Experts agree that Zika is behind a surge in cases of the birth defect microcephaly—babies born with abnormally small heads and brains—after their mothers were infected with the virus.

But it is not clear just to what extent the disease, for which there is no vaccine or treatment for Zika, is linked with GBS.

The ARS said that 1,770 people had contacted doctors between May 9 and 15 to ascertain if they might have the virus.

The first Zika-related death was in Brazil last November and two other deaths have followed.

Last week, Puerto Rican health authorities announced the first case of Zika-related microcephaly in a foetus, as the US territory grapples with the spread of the mosquito-borne virus.

© 2016 AFP

Citation: First Zika virus death in France's Martinique: authorities (Update) (2016, May 20) retrieved 9 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-05-zika-virus-death-france-martinique.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.