

Zika's potential threat to world blood supply deserves study—and action

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

Blood safety researchers say it is highly likely that the mosquito-borne Zika virus can be transmitted through blood transfusions and are calling for an evidence-based approach to protecting the blood supply from the

threat of Zika virus according to a commentary in the journal *Transfusion*.

The researchers say among several possible steps that could be taken to mitigate safety concerns: deferring [blood donors](#) who have symptoms of the infection, developing better blood screening tests, and finding ways to reduce the pathogen.

Based on the growing concern over Zika and the [blood supply](#), the National Institutes of Health in February announced interest in supporting research that examines the risk of Zika transmission through transfusion and the potential clinical impact of Zika that might be passed along through blood. In addition the NIH's National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) has made Zika research part of the existing Recipient Epidemiology and Donor Evaluation Study-III (REDS-III) [blood](#) safety research program.

Zika virus, once mainly seen in parts of Asia and Africa, has spread through the Americas and is now transmitted by mosquitoes in Puerto Rico. Mosquito-related transmission has not been reported yet in the continental United States, but people who have travelled to areas where active transmission by mosquitoes occurred have developed the infection upon their return to the U.S. The virus has been linked to birth defects and neurological disease, with thousands of cases being reported in Brazil.

Provided by NIH/National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute

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