

What does Zika virus mean for the children of the Americas?

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A special communication article published online by *JAMA Pediatrics* explores whether new paradigms in child health may emerge because of Zika virus.

Peter J. Hotez, M.D., Ph.D., of the Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, Texas, suggests pediatricians and pediatric subspecialists will need to mobilize quickly "to get ahead of this fast-moving train. According to the World Health Organization, up to 4 million people could be infected with Zika virus by the end of 2016." The article suggests revisiting how the specialty of pediatrics responded to the HIV/AIDS crisis 30 years ago as a possible road map for addressing this new virus infection.

"We are just now waking up to a new normal as we learn more about the complete mental health effects of Zika virus infection. We will likely need to educate and train a new generation of primary care providers, including pediatricians and [pediatric nurse practitioners](#). We will need to assemble interdisciplinary teams of pediatric specialists in neonatology, neurology, psychiatry, rehabilitation medicine and infectious diseases to organize diagnostic, clinical management, and treatment approaches and algorithms for this new illness. We will need new programs of child advocacy. Because Zika virus may equally affect North America, Central America and South America, we will need to expand how we work together across international boundaries. Zika virus will require us to dissolve any existing north-south divisions across pediatrics in the Americas. The next few years will be a challenging period as the number

of congenital and pediatric Zika [virus](#) infections continues to increase from the current epidemic that first exploded in the western hemisphere in 2013," the article concludes.

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