

Baby born in Spain with Zika-caused microcephaly, first in Europe (Update)

July 25 2016

A woman infected with the Zika virus gave birth in Spain on Monday to a baby with the brain-damaging disorder microcephaly, her hospital said, the first case of its kind in Europe.

The mother, who has not been identified, caught the virus on a trip abroad but authorities have declined to say where. A hospital source said she was infected in Latin America, where the virus is prevalent.

"The baby did not require any resuscitation," Felix Castillo, neonatal chief at the Vall d'Hebron hospital in Barcelona, told a press conference, adding that the infant's vital signs were "normal and stable".

The baby's sex has not been revealed for privacy reasons.

The newborn's health is being constantly "monitored" and initial tests confirm that "its head circumference is smaller than normal and that it has microcephaly", Castillo added.

The baby was born by Caesarean section after 40 weeks of pregnancy.

"The mother is doing well," said Elena Carreras, head of obstetrics at the hospital, adding that both parents were "very excited" about the birth.

Authorities announced in May that they had detected microcephaly in the foetus, but the couple decided to keep the baby.

Doctors refused to give any further information about the mother or child.

A woman in Slovenia who was pregnant with a baby with microcephaly was previously found to have been carrying the virus, but she decided to have an abortion.

Birth warnings

News of the birth in Spain came as researchers warned that tens of thousands of babies may be born with debilitating Zika-related disorders in the course of the outbreak sweeping through Latin America and the Caribbean.

Mathematical projections suggest about 93.4 million people may catch the virus—including some 1.65 million pregnant women—before the epidemic fizzles out, a team reported on Monday in the journal *Nature Microbiology*.

Study co-author Alex Perkins of the University of Notre Dame in the United States said that in a worst-case scenario "somewhere on the order of tens of thousands" across Latin America and the Caribbean could develop microcephaly or a related condition.

The research team predicted that Olympics host Brazil will suffer more than double the impact of any other country, with about 580,000 pregnant women out of 37.4 million total infections.

Another recent study had put the annual number of pregnancies in the Zika-affected region at about 5.4 million.

But many of those, the new paper said, would not be affected by Zika, due to the effects of "herd immunity", the process by which people

become immune to a virus after their first exposure until there are not enough susceptible people to keep the epidemic going.

Earlier this month, a study in the American journal *Science* predicted the outbreak should be over within three years.

The virus, for which there is no cure or vaccine, was first discovered in Uganda in 1947, and took the world by surprise when it emerged with such virulence, in Latin America last year.

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