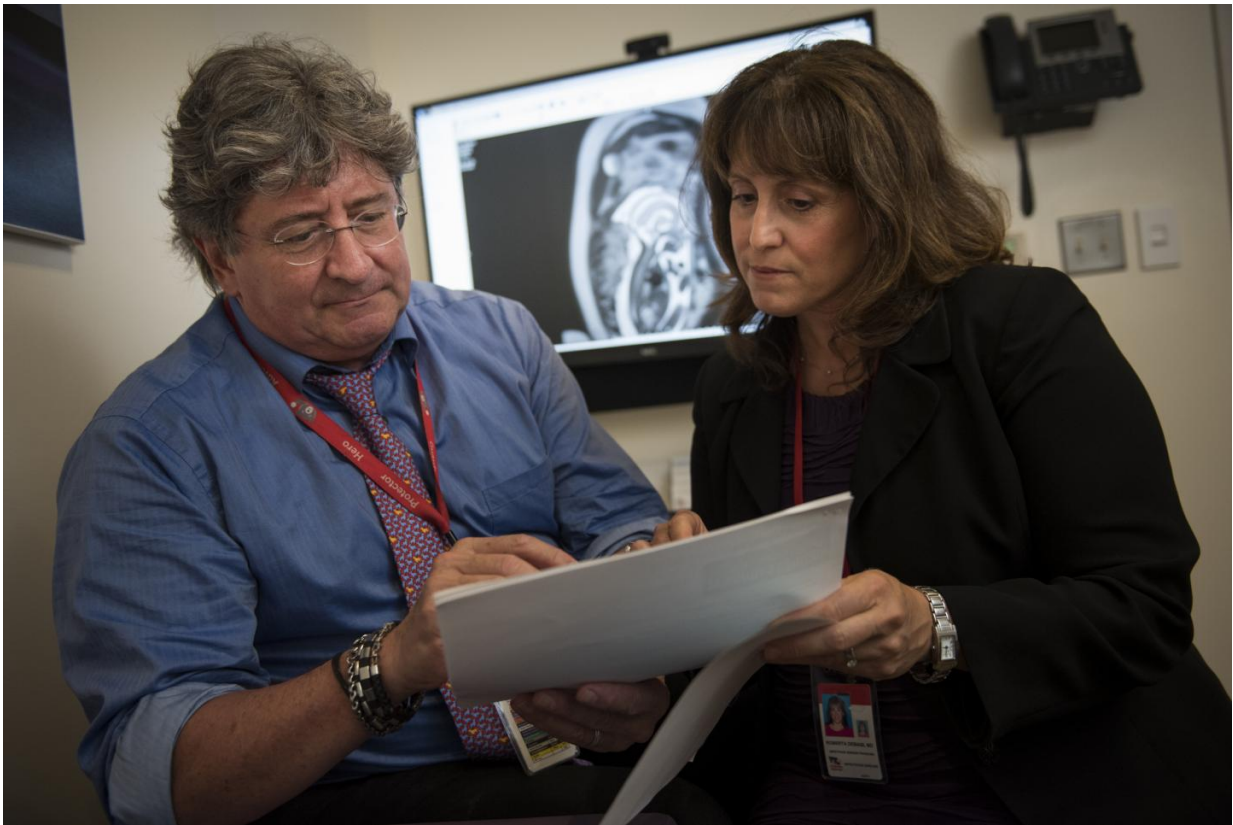


Congenital Zika virus program at Children's National Health System

July 28 2016



Adre du Plessis, MBChB, Director of the Fetal Medicine Institute and Chief of the Fetal and Transitional Medicine Division, and Roberta DeBiasi, MD, MS, Chief of the Division of Infectious Disease, co-lead an interdisciplinary team at Children's National Health System managing pregnancies and births complicated by the Zika virus. Credit: Children's National Health System

Federal health officials continue to investigate the first possible cases of domestic Zika virus transmission in Florida. In light of the growing number of Zika infections, the vast majority of which have been associated with foreign travel, vigilance for additional cases is warranted - particularly as summer heat intensifies and mosquito populations grow.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) now advises that all pregnant women in the continental United States and U.S. territories be evaluated for Zika infection at each prenatal care visit. The CDC also recognizes that Zika-exposed infants will require long-term, multidisciplinary care.

In mid-May, Children's National Health System Fetal Medicine Institute and Division of Pediatric Infectious Disease announced the formation of a Congenital Zika Virus Program to serve as a dedicated resource for referring clinicians and for [pregnant women](#) to receive counseling and science-driven answers about the impact of the Zika virus on pregnancies and newborns. Children's clinicians have consulted on 17 pregnancies or births with potential Zika virus exposure and/or infection. As of July 26, five were Zika-positive or probable. One of the pregnancies was the subject of an article published by *The New England Journal of Medicine*.

"While we're hopeful there are few local cases, the Congenital Zika Virus Program has been developing emergency response plans in collaboration with local departments of health to prepare for any eventuality," says Roberta DeBiasi, MD, MS, Chief of the Division of Infectious Disease and Congenital Zika Virus Program co-leader.

Over the years, Children's National has invested in equipment and highly trained personnel, building world-class expertise in infectious diseases, pediatric neurology, pediatric cardiology, genetics, neurodevelopment, and other specialties. Children's clinicians are recognized leaders in next-

generation imaging techniques, such as fetal MRI, which detects more subtle and earlier indications of impaired brain growth. A variety of divisions work together to offer multidisciplinary support and coordinated care to infants born with special needs.

As the nation braces for the possible expansion of Zika virus infection to other states, Children's National is facilitating the multi-step process of testing blood, urine, and tissue with state health departments, helping to ensure timely and precise information. Children's National specialists guide Zika-affected pregnancies through the fetal period and are able to oversee and coordinate the care of Zika-affected infants after delivery. Care and clinical support is provided by a multidisciplinary team of pediatric neurologists, ophthalmologists, audiologists, physical and occupational therapists, infectious disease experts, and neurodevelopmental physicians.

Provided by Children's National Health System

Citation: Congenital Zika virus program at Children's National Health System (2016, July 28) retrieved 6 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-07-congenital-zika-virus-children-national.html>

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