

## In hard-hit Peru, worry mounts over both COVID-19 and dengue

October 23 2020, by Rodrigo Abd

---



Lidia Choque eats her lunch in a ward designated for patients diagnosed with dengue and the new coronavirus, at a public hospital in Pucallpa, in Peru's Ucayali region, Saturday, Oct. 3, 2020. The 53-year-old woman stayed nearly two weeks in the ward with eight female dengue patients, riddled with anxiety over her condition. "I felt desperate," she said. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)

Two of Lidia Choque's close family members had already gotten sick with the new coronavirus when the mosquitos arrived.

The 53-year-old woman lives in a wooden house near the airport of a Peruvian city in the Amazon rainforest. City fumigators usually visit several times during the rainy season to eliminate the pests, but this year, because of the pandemic, they were absent.

When she went to a hospital after coming down with a fever and body aches, doctors delivered a double diagnosis: COVID-19 and [dengue](#).

"I couldn't even walk," she said.

As Peru grapples with one the world's worst SARS-CoV-2 outbreaks, another virus is starting to raise alarm: dengue.

Health officials have reported over 35,000 cases this year, concentrated largely in the Amazon. The rise comes amid an overall dip in the number of new daily [coronavirus](#) infections, though authorities worry a [second wave](#) could strike as dengue cases rise.

In the city of Pucallpa, where Choque lives, doctors say they are already encountering patients with both illnesses. Two physicians said dengue symptoms like fever and muscle aches tend to dominate, though the combination with COVID-19 can prove deadly.



Clouds of insecticide seep into a dining room during a fumigation operation to help control the spread of dengue fever, in downtown Pucallpa, Peru, Tuesday, Sept. 29, 2020. As Peru grapples with one of the world's worst COVID-19 outbreaks, another epidemic is starting to raise alarm: Dengue. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)

"There is more risk," said Dr. Rosmery Rojas, a physician at a [public hospital](#) she said is seeing 120 dengue patients a day.

The Ucayali region located along a muddy river has long seen periodic dengue outbreaks, though Rojas and others said this year's figures are already three times that seen in 2019. Throughout the Americas, there were more than 3.1 million dengue cases last year, the highest number on record, according to the Pan American Health Organization.

The Americas branch of the World Health Organization reports there has been an overall decrease in a dengue cases during the pandemic—with a little more than [2 million recorded](#) so far this year, including 845 deaths. Nearly 1.4 million of those cases have been in Brazil.

It is unclear whether the reduction is related to COVID-19, though a spokeswoman said public health measures aimed at preventing the new virus may have played a role.



Relatives accompany the coffin that contains the remains of Jose Barbaran who is believed to have died from complications related to the new coronavirus, as they travel by boat on Peru's Ucayali River, Tuesday, Sept. 29, 2020. Despite the risk, family members decided to travel by night to Barbaran's hometown of Palestina, a four-hour journey. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)

Nonetheless, in the Peruvian Amazon a mounting number of dengue patients are filling hospital beds that months before were overwhelmed by COVID-19 patients. Some, like Choque, are told they have both illness when they arrive at the hospital.

"Many people are arriving co-infected," said Dr. Mariano Alarcón.

Dengue is a mosquito-borne disease also known as "breakbone fever" for its severely painful symptoms. Southeast Asian countries like Singapore and Indonesia have also dealt with dual dengue and virus outbreaks this year as lockdowns put prevention activities on hold.

Dengue is not usually fatal but severe cases can require hospitalization. Removing trash, old tires and other objects containing standing water can help curb the disease—actions officials in Peru are now carrying out in hopes of quashing the uptick in dengue cases.



Illuminated with candles and a cell phone blue light, a doctor examines the lifeless body of Jose Barbaran who is believed to have died from complications related to the new coronavirus, in a relative's home in Pucallpa, in Peru's Ucayali region, Tuesday, Sept. 29, 2020. As Peru grapples with one of the world's worst COVID-19 outbreaks, another epidemic is starting to raise alarm: Dengue. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)



Barbaran family members eat lunch prior to the burial ceremony of their relative Jose Barbaran who is believed to have died from complications related to the new coronavirus, in Palestina, in Peru's Ucajali region, Wednesday, Sept. 30, 2020. As Peru grapples with one of the world's worst virus outbreaks, another epidemic is starting to raise alarm: Dengue. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)



Barbaran family members eat lunch prior to the burial service of their relative Jose Barbaran who is believed to have died from complications related to the new coronavirus, in Palestina, in Peru's Ucayali region, Wednesday, Sept. 30, 2020. As Peru grapples with one the world's worst virus outbreaks, another epidemic is starting to raise alarm: Dengue. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)





Barbaran family members pay their final respects to relative Jose Barbaran who is believed to have died from complications related to the new coronavirus, in Palestina, in Peru's Ucayali region, Wednesday, Sept. 30, 2020. As Peru grapples with one the world's worst virus outbreaks, another epidemic is starting to raise alarm: Dengue. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)



Valentina Esperanza, who is recovering from dengue, sits on her bed protected by mosquito netting as she watches a television program at her home in Pucallpa, in Peru's Ucayali region, Tuesday, Sept. 29, 2020. In the Peruvian Amazon a mounting number of dengue patients are filling up hospital beds that months before were overwhelmed by COVID-19 patients. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)



Leila Ramirez, who is suffering from dengue, stands in her doorway as a member of the campaign against dengue documents their visit on the wood siding of her home, in Pucallpa, in Peru's Ucayali region, Tuesday, Sept. 29, 2020. Five members in Ramirez's family were diagnosed with dengue in late September, but have since recovered. In recent weeks, health officials have reported over 33,000 dengue cases, concentrated largely in the Amazon. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)



Relatives and neighbors attend the burial service for Jose Barbaran who is believed to have died from complications related to the new coronavirus, in Palestina, in Peru's Ucayali region, Wednesday, Sept. 30, 2020. As Peru grapples with one the world's worst virus outbreaks, another epidemic is starting to raise alarm: Dengue. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)



Suffering from a high fever related to dengue, 72-year-old Luz Rengifo rests inside her home, in Pucallpa, in Peru's Ucayali region, Tuesday, Sept. 29, 2020. A portrait of her mother Gertrudis Rengifo, who died last August from dengue at the age of 96, hangs in the background. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)



Corazona Pena's body lies in a coffin, wrapped in plastic by a Peruvian COVID-19 specialized government team in Pucallpa, in Peru's Ucayali region, Tuesday, Sept. 29, 2020. As Peru grapples with one the world's worst virus outbreaks, another epidemic is starting to raise alarm: Dengue. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)



An actor who was hired by the government to assume the role of a mosquito is engulfed by clouds of pesticide during a fumigation campaign against dengue in Pucallpa, in Peru's Ucayali region, Saturday, Oct. 3, 2020. Dengue is a mosquito-borne disease also known as "breakbone fever" for its severely painful symptoms. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)



A light rain falls as 20-year-old Deyla Arce Soria stands in a doorway lamenting the death of her mother Jessica Soria Gonzales, a Shipibo Amazonian Indigenous artist who died from complications related to the new coronavirus at the age of 50, in Pucallpa, in Peru's Ucayali region, Wednesday, Oct. 7, 2020. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)





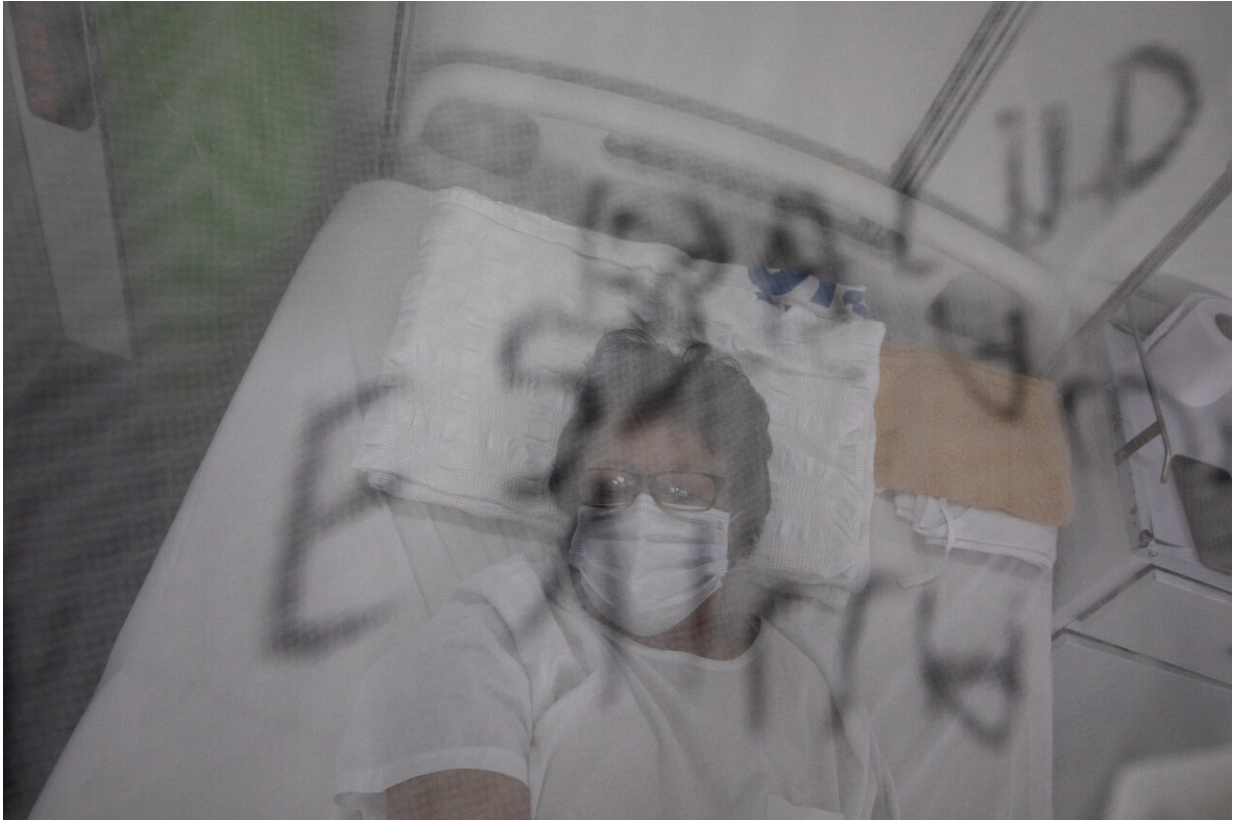
Rolando Cegarra nuzzles his 4-month-old grandson, inside his home in the Caimito Native Community, in Peru's Ucayali region, Monday, Oct. 4, 2020. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)



A COVID-19 patient is assisted by an artificial respirator in the intensive care unit of a public hospital in Pucallpa, in Peru's Ucayali region, Tuesday, Oct. 6, 2020. In the city of Pucallpa, doctors say they are beginning to encounter patients with the double diagnosis of COVID-19 and dengue. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)



Doctors transfer a COVID-19 patient from a stretcher onto a hospital bed in the intensive care unit of a public hospital in Pucallpa, in Peru's Ucayali region, Saturday, Oct. 3, 2020. In the city of Pucallpa, doctors say they are beginning to encounter patients with the double diagnosis of COVID-19 and dengue. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)(AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)



Doris Perez rests in a special section for patients who suffers both from dengue and the new coronavirus, in a public hospital in Pucallpa, Ucayali region, Peru, Saturday, Oct. 3, 2020. In the Peruvian Amazon a mounting number of dengue patients are filling up hospital beds that months before were overwhelmed by COVID-19 patients. Some are told they have both illness when they arrive sick at the hospital. (AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd)

Choque said she went to the hospital after her symptoms didn't go away. A rapid virus antibody test—which can indicate a prior infection—came back negative, but a doctor saw spots on a chest X-ray that led her to diagnose COVID-19. The mother of three is still skeptical of whether she had the virus.

She stayed nearly two weeks in a ward with eight female dengue

patients, riddled with anxiety over her condition.

"I felt desperate," she said.

Looking back, Choque believes the absence of fumigation likely contributed to her coming down with dengue. She set up cans filled with lit charcoal and dried eucalyptus leaves to drive the mosquitos away, but she said they were still rampant when she fell sick.

"There's been more focus on COVID," she said. "They've neglected dengue."

© 2020 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed without permission.

Citation: In hard-hit Peru, worry mounts over both COVID-19 and dengue (2020, October 23) retrieved 12 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-10-hard-hit-peru-mounts-covid-dengue.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.