

Tulane Launches Zika Research in Honduras

|
Dee Boling dboling@tulane.edu

[View PDF](#)

Starting July 20, researchers at the Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine will begin recruiting participants for a study on Zika virus and pregnancy in Honduras.

The [study](#) aims to assess the frequency of Zika virus infection, and the association of microcephaly with Zika virus infection in a recently infected setting. Researchers plan to enroll 2,000 pregnant women over the course of one year. The protocol of the study calls for enrolling pregnant women at their first antenatal visit at the Alonso Suazo Health Center and following them through delivery at two hospitals (Hospital Escuela Universitario and Hospital General San Felipe). The study will build a cohort which will serve as a foundation for future in-depth or follow-up studies.

Evidence points to a link between symptomatic Zika virus in pregnant women to infants born with microcephaly, a condition where an infant's head is abnormally smaller than other infants of the same age resulting from incomplete brain development.

The investigators are working with colleagues from several institutions in Honduras. The virology laboratory the Honduras National Autonomous University (Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Honduras) will provide laboratory analysis of the samples, while the Antonio Vidal Institute of Infectious Diseases and Parasitology (Instituto de Enfermedades Infecciosas y Parasitología Antonio Vidal) a not-for-profit foundation in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, will coordinate the project. The Institute for Clinical Effectiveness and Health Policy (Instituto de Efectividad Clínica y Sanitaria [IECS]) in Buenos Aires, Argentina, will serve as the data center.

“The importance of carrying this study in Honduras is that it will allow testing of the hypothesis linking Zika virus infection during pregnancy and increased risk of microcephaly in a more recently infected setting, where Zika outbreak is developing,” said Dr. Pierre Buekens, dean of the school and principal investigator.

Dr. Jackeline Alger, adjunct professor of tropical medicine added, “We couldn’t achieve this level of organization among the study sites if it weren’t for the commitment and collaboration of the various institutional health authorities.”

The project is anticipated to last for two years, from initial development through reporting.