

# *Mosquito Transmitted Chikungunya Becomes Epidemic in the Caribbean*

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Havana, May 5 (RHC-Mercopress) -- The head of the Caribbean Public Health Authority (CARPHA), Dr James Hospedales, has declared the Chikungunya virus has reached epidemic proportions in the Caribbean. The mosquito-borne illness was first detected in the Caribbean in December 2013, in St Martin, and last week Antigua and St Vincent and the Grenadines became the latest countries to declare an outbreak. "By definition this is an epidemic since it represents an unusual number of cases of this problem where we would never have it before," Dr Hospedales told the Caribbean Media Corporation (CMC).

According to Dr Hospedales, as of April 28th, there were 4,108 probable cases in 14 countries across the region. He also stated that Caribbean countries have been putting measures in place to address the spread of the virus.

Chikungunya is spread by the *Aedes Egypti* mosquito, which also spreads dengue fever.

"This is not a severe disease, in that people don't die from it, whereas dengue can kill you, but Chikungunya has more long term effects, a significant percent of people will have joint pains one, two years afterwards," Hospedales said.

Hospedales noted there are steps that can be taken to contain the disease. “Our main recommendations are to continue to educate members of the public on the current situation, and get accurate information to avoid confusion.

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