

Reports of Zika Sexual Spread Concerns WHO



Geneva, February 4 (RHC)-- The World Health Organization (WHO) has voiced concerns about the alleged sexual transmission of the Zika virus in the U.S., calling for a thorough probe into the case.

The UN health agency reacted on Wednesday after local health authorities in Dallas, Texas, announced the first U.S.-based known case of Zika virus transmission, which has possibly spread via sexual intercourse and not a mosquito bite.

"We certainly understand the concern. This needs to be further investigated to understand the conditions and how often or likely sexual transmission is, and whether or not other body fluids are implicated," said WHO spokesman, Gregory Hartl. He added that the reported case is the second of its kind as media reports said an American man who had returned from Senegal in 2008 is suspected of having infected his wife.

The virus that is spread by the *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes, causes birth defects. It is affecting the Americas, prompting the WHO to declare an international public health emergency about the condition known as microcephaly, which is a devastating condition in which a baby is born with an abnormally small head and brain. It is an untreatable disease that may lead to permanent damage to child's motor and cognitive development.

The agency has also warned about the spread of the mosquito-borne virus to Africa and Asia, which have the highest birth rates in the world, as well as to Southern Europe.

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