Dear Editor

The Americas region is currently facing a health alert owed to the increase of cases of Zika virus infection. In May 2015, the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) already published an alert regarding the first reports of the infection in Brazil. However, even though measures have been taken, the disease has been reported in at least 25 countries, including Colombia, Mexico, and Brazil [1]. The health threat has reached a global level after the World Health Organization declared that the disease was a public health emergency with international importance for it being the possible cause of microcephaly and other neurological disorders in newborns in the affected areas [2].

The disease was first identified in Uganda, an East-African country, and was later noted only as sporadic cases in Africa and Asia. In 2007, however, the first outbreak was reported in the state of Yap, one of the Federated States of Micronesia. It was estimated that >73% of the population ≥3 years of age or older was infected. Subsequent outbreaks occurred in the South-East Asia and Eastern Pacific regions [3]. The major part of the cases could be attributed to an increase in the frequency of travel to affected areas and global dissemination of the main transmission vectors, the mosquitos and [4].

The illness caused by the Zika virus is asymptomatic in up to 80% of cases, the exception being pregnant women, who might have potentially severe outcomes. Typical manifestations of the illness are fever, maculopapular rash, arthralgias with predominion in hands and feet, and non-purulent conjunctivitis. The symptoms start between 2 to 12 days after the mosquito bite and resolve in 4 to 7 days. Currently, there is no specific viral treatment. The use of support measures, such as rest, fluid intake, analgesics and antipyretics is recommended [5].

In Peru, no autochthonous cases have so far been reported, the only person to fall ill being a frequent traveler to Venezuela [6]. Taking into account the country is facing a particularly hot summer, owed to the el Niño phenomenon, however, the situation is critical, since the environment is ideal for the virus transmission. The government, through the Ministry of Health, has adopted a series of health measures with the common goal of diminishing the presence and stopping the entrance of the vector into the country, such as strict airport and border control, with immediate attention being given to people with suspicious symptomatology; fumigation of hotels, restaurants and other touristic infrastructure in the North and the Amazon region, as well as accommodation in areas with high vector prevalence; in addition, the government is implementing information measures in the community to prevent transmission, with special attention being given to pregnant women, women of childbearing age and women trying to become pregnant [7, 8].

These days, the process of globalization is a gateway for the appearance of diverse infectious diseases in the American region, specifically vector-transmitted infections. The prevention strategies implemented by Peru are working, however, we should strengthen our efforts in the future. Our country is very susceptible to the climate change, which according to Lancet might be the biggest health threat in the 21st century [9]. This increases the possibility and the subsequent impact of an outbreak of an infectious disease, such as Zika.
The government currently facing this threats should enforce its strategies of mitigation and adaptation with special attention to public health, and should be of assistance to the public health sector when it comes to the control of diseases caused by global warming. It is necessary, for this reason, to increase the percentage of gross domestic product destined to the health institutions, it currently being one of the lowest in the region [10]. A legal framework enabling the state to intervene throughout the country to implement responses to health-threatening situations should also be established. We strongly believe that the biggest trial for Peru is not to respond to the virus Zika outbreak, but to respond to the climate change possibly causing it and to other consequences brought on by inactivity in this complex problem in the past.

**REFERENCES**


