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Abortion Rates Up in Zika-Infected

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The requests for abortions in Brazil and other Latin American countries has doubled following the announcement that Zika virus infections during pregnancy is linked to microcephaly in newborns. And the rates seem to be much higher within the Latin America countries that have national campaigns to help educate about the Zika virus.



The data is presented by clinical researchers publishing their results in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

The researchers look at abortion requests in 3 groups of countries:

Group A – Countries where Zika virus transmission was ongoing, abortion was legally restricted, and there was national public advisories to pregnant women.

Group B – Countries with no Zika virus transmission in the surrounding areas, abortion was legally restricted and there was national public advisories.

Group C- Countries where Zika virus transmission was ongoing, abortion was legally restricted, and no national public advisories to pregnant women.

Results

Group A- Significant increases in requests for abortion appeared in Group A. Countries like Brazil, Ecuador, and Venezuela nearly doubled the amount of actual requests from expected requests. The other countries in Group A, excluding Jamaica, had higher increase in requests, averaging over 30%.

Group B – Argentina, Peru and Trinidad had smaller increases for abortion requests just averaging 20%. Of Group B, the Bahamas was the only one to have a higher increase around 43%. However, eventually officials caused concern about Zika virus transmissions by asking the government to declare a preemptive state of emergency.

Group C- Bolivia was the only country to average over the 20% range for Group C, averaging around 68%. No other significant increases were observed in group C or in any control countries.

Researchers published in the *New England Jourdan of Medicine* reports “We cannot definitively attribute the rapid acceleration in requests in group A to concern about Zika virus exposure. However, the percentage of women in each country who reported such concern as their reason for seeking abortion


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correlates with the observed country-specific increases in requests over baseline trends.”

Pregnant women in Latin America may be conflicted with what is the best choice for them. Many of these countries have strict abortion laws as well as a religious culture that frowns upon abortion. These legal and cultural concerns may be in sharp conflict with the pregnant woman’s innate desire to avoid a life long battle of raising a child with microcephaly.

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