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# Abortion pill orders increase in Zika-stricken Latin American countries

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eNEWSLETTER

The demand for abortion pills has increased in seven Latin American countries hardest hit by Zika virus, according to a new study published Wednesday, June 22.

Researchers investigated whether the number of abortion pill orders in 19 Latin American countries is affected by the Zika virus alert. They published their results in the [New England Journal of Medicine](#).



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(Reuters/Carlo Allegri)

A woman looks at a Center for Disease Control (CDC) health advisory sign about the dangers of the Zika virus as she lines up for a security screening at Miami International Airport in Miami, Florida, U.S., May 23, 2016.

Looking at data from January 2010 to March 2016, researchers found out that there was a 36 to 108 percent increase of abortion pill orders in several countries — particularly those where abortion is illegal, autochthonous Zika virus transmission has been detected, and public advisories have been released to warn the public against the virus.

In Brazil, Venezuela and Ecuador, the figures almost doubled. In Colombia, Honduras, El Salvador and Costa Rica, the demand for abortion pills increased from 36 to 76 percent.

The study used data from Women on Web, an online nonprofit organization that helps connect women with doctors and suppliers of abortion meds in countries where abortion is restricted or illegal.

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"In Latin American countries that issued warnings to pregnant women about complications associated with Zika virus infection, requests for abortion through WoW increased significantly," the study authors wrote.

They added that their data could be underestimated because it does not include women who opted to terminate their pregnancies through other means.

Gilda Sedgh, head of research at Guttmacher Institute and not involved in the study, said the figures in the study could be "spurious" because the WoW website only "accounts for a small share of all abortions in that part of the world," [The New](#)

[York Times](#) reported.

She added that the website may have gained more visibility online when the Zika virus alerts exploded in 2015. However, the study could be "an early warning sign" for increased abortion demand because of Zika.

Zika virus is transmitted by the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, the same vector that carries the dengue and chikungunya viruses. Its symptoms are quite mild and mostly include fever, joint pain, rash and conjunctivitis, which can last for a few days.

However, it has been shown to cause microcephaly and other brain defects in babies born to mothers who were transmitted with the virus while they were pregnant, according to the U.S. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

The Pan American Health Organization issued a Zika virus alert in Brazil, where the first cases of Zika-linked microcephaly were observed, in May 2015. In February, the World Health Organization announced that Zika virus disease is a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

There has been no local Zika virus transmission seen in the U.S., but the virus has been detected on persons who traveled to Zika-stricken countries. Health authorities have cautioned pregnant women and women planning to get pregnant to avoid going to such countries and take measures to prevent mosquito bites.

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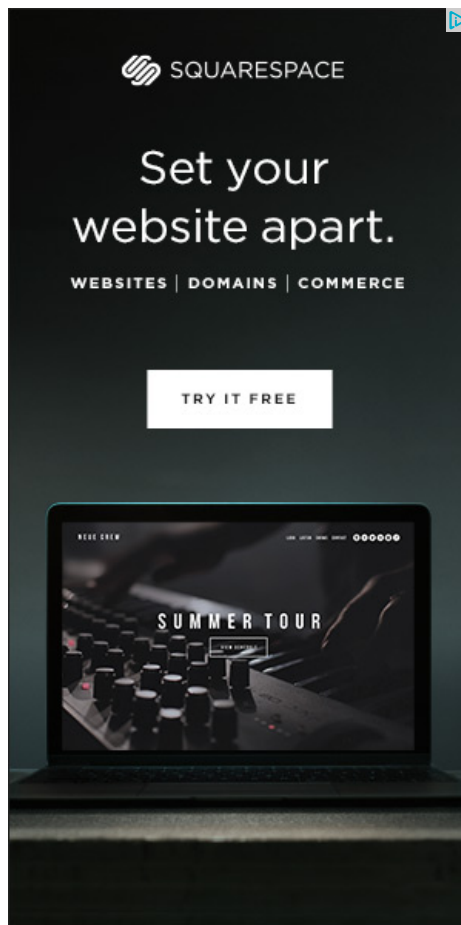
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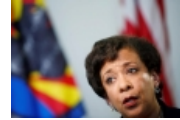
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