

Should EMS Data be Monitored for Zika Infection?

FirstWatch likes to provide surveillance and early warning for many different threats to our clients – that was, in fact, the initial reason for starting the company. So, it makes sense that the question would be asked by us, and perhaps by you, if Zika should be monitored through the data we capture for you. We have seriously contemplated it and will outline our rationale to not recommend doing so at this time. However, we would very much like to hear from you if you disagree with this decision – or, even if you agree.

Reasons that monitoring data for Zika would probably not be helpful include:

- Knowing the reason that we develop a trigger or collect that data for an infectious disease.

Typically, it is to help local and regional governments or agencies establish the presence or boundaries of an infection or event. Or, to help prepare First Responders for an atypical response to allow adoption of special PPE and procedures, send a specific response unit(s), allow for tracking for employee follow up, or for reimbursement, etc.

- The signs & symptoms of Zika are like other infections which are actually more common, including other mosquito-transmitted viruses, flu or other infections, making it difficult to determine at dispatch or in the ePCR that the infection is likely Zika. Testing is needed to determine if a person is infected with Zika.
- Only about 20% of those infected will actually have any symptoms, therefore any data will only outline, at most 1/5 of all infections.
- So many countries and regions throughout the world * currently have locally transmitted Zika that including a travel question doesn't really narrow the list of possible infections to Zika.

* <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/active-countries.html>

Any agencies who desire to monitor their data for Zika, are of course welcome to do so. Please just let us know, and we'll work with you to develop whatever you need.

Note: For those agencies that use ProQA, the IAED CBRN Committee has discussed whether surveillance for Zika is warranted, and has NOT recommended questioning or monitoring for Zika in EMS. If that changes, FirstWatch will advise our customers, and create Zika-specific triggers as needed.



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