

Republican Perspective
23 March 2016
by Ed Manning

CONTROLLING THE ZIKA VIRUS

“If the world was perfect, it wouldn’t be.” Yogi Berra

The Zika virus (ZV) is now a pandemic, spreading to many countries outside of its latest breakout in Brazil. The U.S Center for Disease Control reports there are currently 193 travel related cases in the U.S. with 13 in California. The CDC’s Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was activated in January and moved quickly to its highest level of activation. The EOC has over 300 staff working with local, national and international scientists to serve as the command center for monitoring and coordinating emergency responses to ZV outbreaks.

The EOC is also developing lab tests to diagnose Zika. In addition, it is conducting studies to learn more about the link between Zika and microcephaly and Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS).

Microcephaly is a condition where a baby’s head is much smaller than expected. It has been linked to seizures, developmental delay, intellectual disability, problems with movement and balance, feeding problems, hearing loss and vision problems.

GBS is a disorder in which the body’s immune system attacks part of the peripheral nervous system. The first symptoms of this disorder include varying degrees of weakness or tingling sensations in the legs. In many instances the weakness and abnormal sensations spread to the arms and upper body. These symptoms can increase in intensity until certain muscles cannot be used at all and, when severe, the person is almost totally paralyzed. In these cases the disorder is life threatening.

ZV is transmitted by mosquitoes and the World Health Organization (WHO) forecasts that 4,000,000 people worldwide could be infected by the end of 2016. Drug companies are working feverishly to develop a vaccine but that usually takes years along with multi-million dollar expenditures. Also, they are working to insure that our blood supplies are free of ZV.

So the common sense question is why the CDC and the WHO are not calling for the spraying of DDT to kill mosquitoes? Part of the answer might be the expected fierce opposition from the environmental movement. The banning of DDT goes back to the early 1970’s after intense debate. Many scientists however, believe the ban was based upon false science.

In 1971, the Environmental Protection Agency held seven months of hearings and heard testimony from 125 individuals. Judge Edmund Sweeney then issued his verdict: “The uses of DDT under the registration involved here do not have a deleterious effect

on freshwater fish, estuarine organisms, wild birds, or other wildlife. . . . DDT is not a carcinogenic hazard to man.”

Well, Republican EPA Administrator, William Ruckelshaus thought he knew better, and overruled Judge Sweeney. DDT was effectively banned in the U.S. and Europe soon followed. A Republican gave the emerging environmental movement one of its biggest victories.

Now we have the ZV that poses a serious threat to pregnant women. No vaccine is in the immediate offering. Why not kill the mosquitoes before they secrete their life altering virus into untold numbers of pregnancies? DDT is a safe response until the drug community, so loved by Bernie & Hillary, can develop a vaccine. Once developed, Bernie will say it should be distributed for free.

One sane voice is calling for the use of DDT. Dr. Jane Orient, the Executive Director of the Association of American Physicians and Surgeons. She offers: “The ban on DDT was basically the decision of one man, William Ruckelshaus, going against a mountain of evidence on safety and enormous health benefits.”

Dr. Orient believes that “we could stop transmission now with effective mosquito control in affected areas.” She advises against providing pregnant women with drugs or vaccines that have not been thoroughly tested. Reuters news agency reports the “decline in use of pesticides such as DDT,” along with the increase in international travel, as factors behind notorious outbreaks of mosquito-borne diseases like dengue, chikungunya, the West Nile virus, and malaria.

Why must the world be exposed to ZV when DDT could safely minimize its effects? Health agencies, politicians and environmentalists must recognize that both unborn children and adults deserve a fighting chance.