

# ZIKA VIRUS DIAGNOSTICS: CURRENT TESTING APPROACHES AND CHALLENGES



**Robert S Lanciotti**

National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases  
Division of Vector Borne Diseases  
Arbovirus Diseases Diagnostic Laboratory



# Global Arbovirus Movement

- West Nile virus: 1999 NYC
- Chikungunya 2005-2006: East Africa to India; then Western Hemisphere 2013
- Zika Virus 2007: Micronesia; then Western Hemisphere 2015

Am. J. Trop. Med. Hyg. 61(4), 1999, pp. 600-611  
Copyright © 1999 by The American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene

## ENTOMOLOGIC AND AVIAN INVESTIGATIONS OF AN EPIDEMIC OF WEST NILE FEVER IN ROMANIA IN 1996, WITH SEROLOGIC AND MOLECULAR CHARACTERIZATION OF A VIRUS ISOLATE FROM MOSQUITOES

H. M. SAVAGE, C. CEANU, G. NICOLESCU, N. KARABATSOS, R. LANCIOTTI, A. VLADMIRESCU, L. LAIV, A. LINGREANU, C. ROMANGA, AND T. F. TSAI  
*Division of Vector-Borne Infectious Diseases, National Center for Infectious Diseases, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Fort Collins, Colorado; Department of Medical Entomology, Cantacuzino Institute, Bucharest, Romania; Romanian Ornithological Center, Bucharest, Romania; Arma Center of Medical Research, Bucharest, Romania; Bucharest Preventive Medicine Center, Bucharest, Romania*

**Abstract:** Between July and October 1996, a West Nile (WN) fever epidemic occurred in the southern plain and Danube Valley of Romania and in the capital city of Bucharest, resulting in hundreds of neurologic cases and 17 fatalities. In early October 1996, entomologic and avian investigations of the epidemic were conducted in the city of

## DISPATCHES

### Chikungunya Virus in US Travelers Returning from India, 2006

Robert S. Lanciotti,\* Olga L. Kosoy,\* Janeen J. Laven,\* Amanda J. Panella,\* Jason O. Velez,\* Amy J. Lambert,\* and Grant L. Campbell\*

Chikungunya virus (CHIKV), a mosquito-borne alpha-virus, is endemic in Africa and Asia. In 2005–2006, CHIKV epidemics were reported in islands in the Indian Ocean and in southern India. We present data on laboratory-confirmed CHIKV infections among travelers returning from India to the United States during 2006.

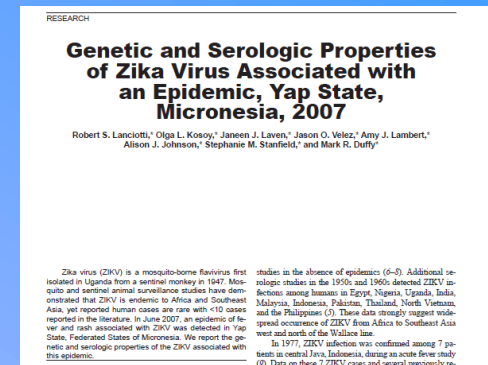
## RESEARCH

### Genetic and Serologic Properties of Zika Virus Associated with an Epidemic, Yap State, Micronesia, 2007

Robert S. Lanciotti,\* Olga L. Kosoy,\* Janeen J. Laven,\* Jason O. Velez,\* Amy J. Lambert,\* Alison J. Johnson,\* Stephanie M. Stanfield,\* and Mark R. Duffy\*

# Zika Epidemic Yap State Federated States of Micronesia; 2007

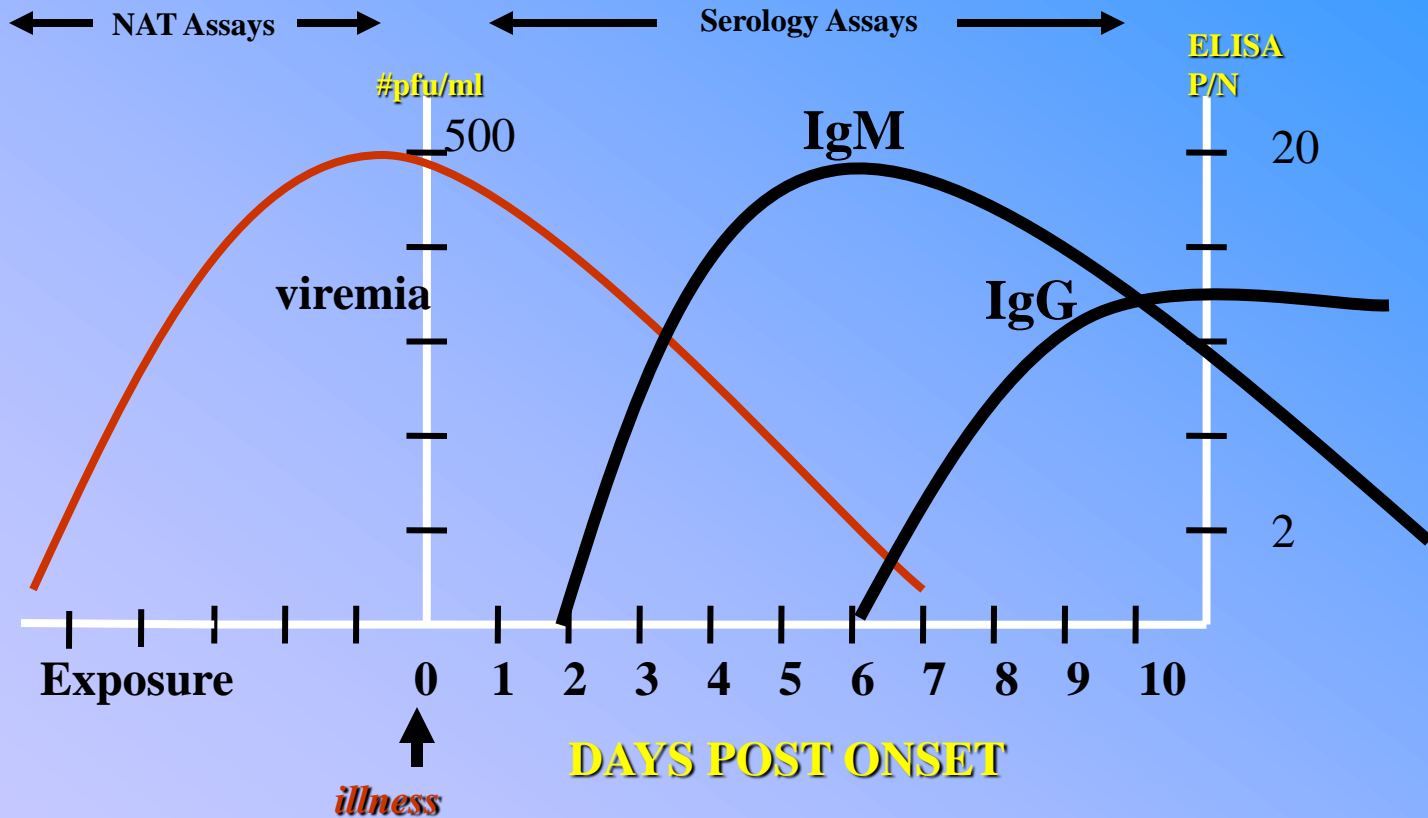
- $\approx 75\%$  residents infected (7,000 total residents)
- $\approx 19\%$  reported symptoms
- Zika virus complete genome derived
- Serological diagnostics developed
- PCR diagnostics developed



**Table 1. Clinical Characteristics of 31 Patients with Confirmed Zika Virus Disease on Yap Island during the Period from April through July 2007.**

| Sign or Symptom            | No. of Patients (%) |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| Macular or papular rash    | 28 (90)             |
| Fever*                     | 20 (65)             |
| Arthritis or arthralgia    | 20 (65)             |
| Nonpurulent conjunctivitis | 17 (55)             |
| Myalgia                    | 15 (48)             |
| Headache                   | 14 (45)             |
| Retro-orbital pain         | 12 (39)             |
| Edema                      | 6 (19)              |
| Vomiting                   | 3 (10)              |

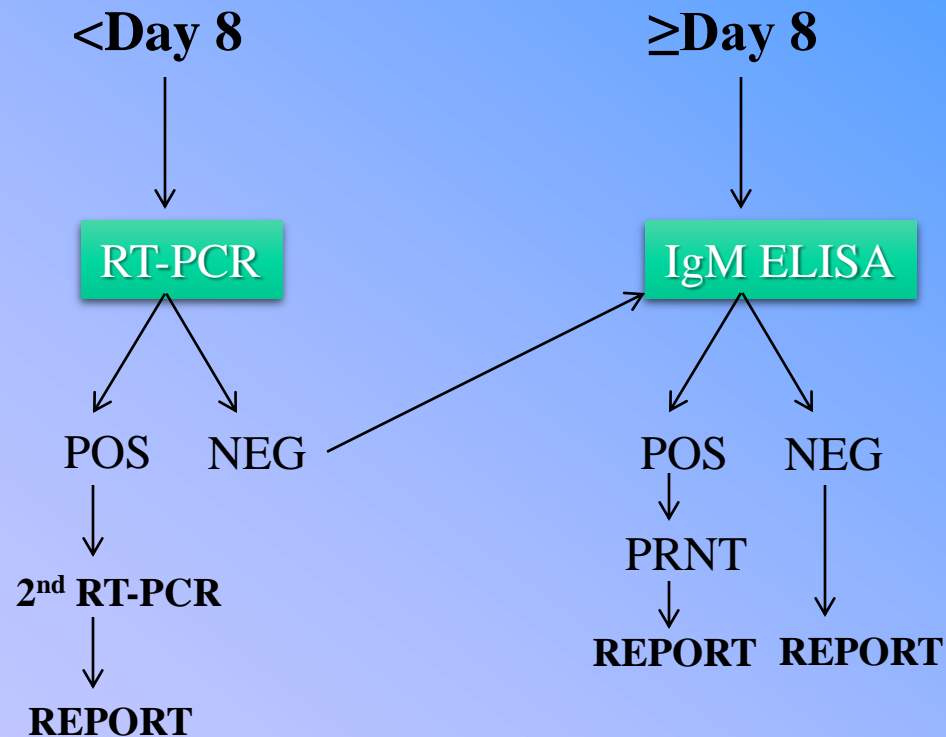
# Human Viremia & Immune Response



# Zika Virus: Available Diagnostic Tests

- Nucleic acid testing (NAT)
  - Real-time RT-PCR
- Antibody testing
  - IgM ELISA
  - Plaque reduction neutralization test (PRNT)

# General Arbovirus Testing Algorithm



# Zika Testing by RT-PCR in Serum

| Day Post-Onset | RT-PCR Zika | Est. copies/ml |
|----------------|-------------|----------------|
| 104004(D3)     | POS         | 1850           |
| 104014(D4)     | POS         | 5800           |
| 103940(D2)     | POS         | 4000           |
| 104121(D2)     | POS         | 930            |
| 104139(D1)     | POS         | 4320           |
| 104138(D1)     | POS         | 1850           |
| 104218(D2)     | POS         | 8570           |
| 104234(D0)     | POS         | 92100          |
| 104004(D7)     | POS         | 2000           |

94 PCR POS (approximately 2000 tested)

Positive Range: Day 0 to Day 7\*

Viral Load: 200,000 to 500 copies/ml  
(Ct average=35.4)

Average: 4000 copies/ml

**62% of RT-PCR positive serum specimens are IgM positive**

\*onset dates are often estimates

# Real Time RT-PCR for Zika Virus

## Serum versus Urine

| Sample      | RT-PCR serum                          | RT-PCR urine                          |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 103922 (D4) | POS (1.5 x 10 <sup>4</sup> copies/ml) | POS (5.7 x 10 <sup>7</sup> copies/ml) |
| 104072 (D3) | NEG                                   | POS (9.3 x 10 <sup>3</sup> copies/ml) |
| 109656 (D3) | POS (6.8 x 10 <sup>4</sup> copies/ml) | NEG                                   |

28 total serum/urine pairs

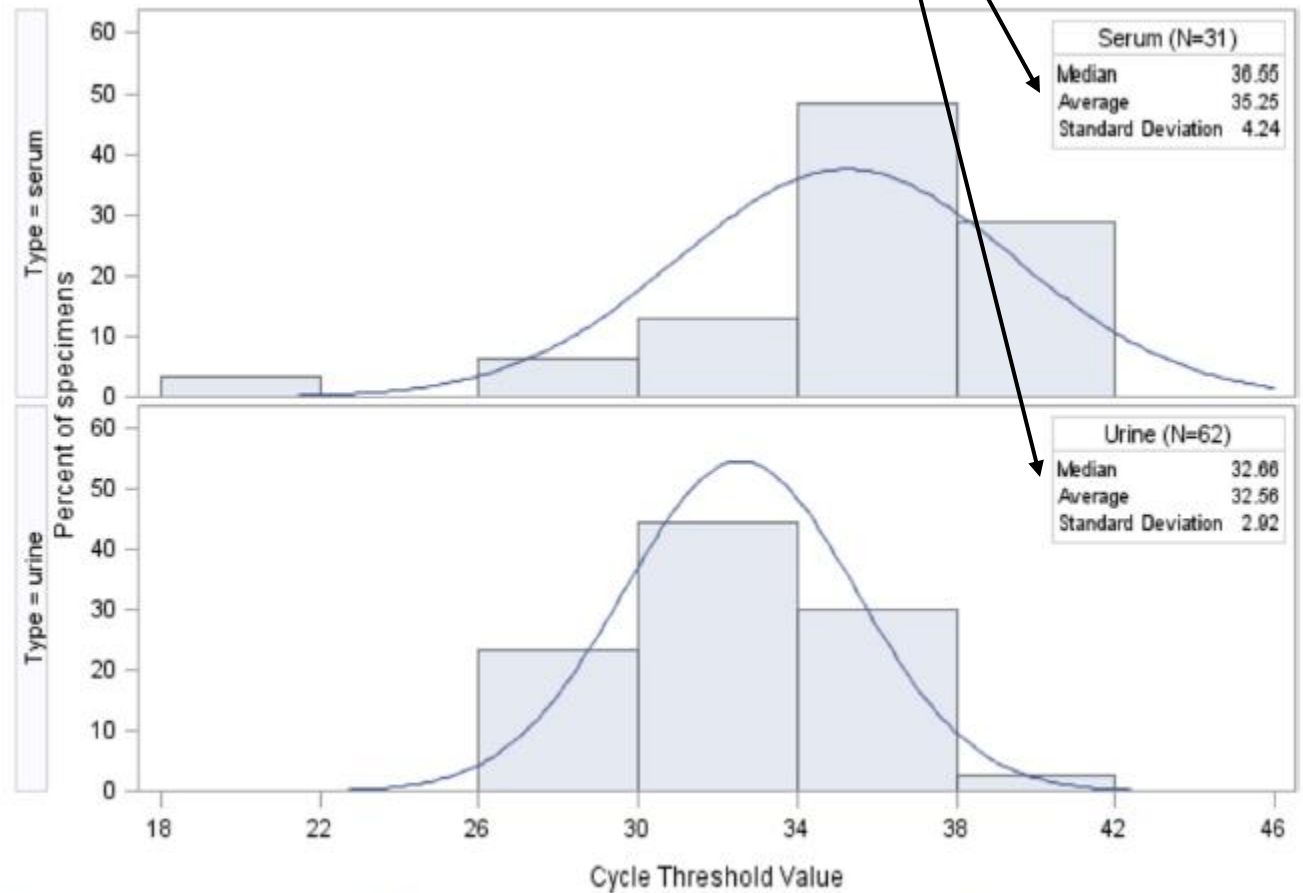
- 9 (32%) positive both
- 15 (54%) positive urine/negative serum
- 4 (14%) positive serum/negative urine
- viremia higher in urine: 185,000 cp/ml (Ct 30.7)

**CONCLUSION: Both sample types should be tested**



## Zika Virus Testing Considerations: Lessons Learned from the First 80 Real-Time Reverse Transcription-PCR-Positive Cases Diagnosed in New York State

© Kirsten St. George,<sup>a</sup> Inderbir S. Sohi,<sup>b</sup> Elizabeth M. Dufort,<sup>b</sup> Amy B. Dean,<sup>a</sup> Jennifer L. White,<sup>b</sup> Ronald Limberger,<sup>a</sup> Jamie N. Sommer,<sup>b</sup> Stephanie Ostrowski,<sup>b</sup> Susan J. Wong,<sup>a</sup> P. Bryon Backenson,<sup>b</sup> Daniel Kuhles,<sup>b</sup> Debra Blog,<sup>b</sup> Jill Taylor,<sup>a</sup> Brad Hutton,<sup>c</sup> Howard A. Zucker<sup>d</sup>



**FIG 2** Distribution of cycle threshold values in positive specimens of serum ( $n = 31$ ) and urine ( $n = 62$ ) tested in the envelope rRT-PCR assay for Zika virus RNA.

# Combined RT-PCR & IgM Testing

**135 acute serum specimens (day 0– day 7 post-onset)**

- 13 (10%) positive by RT-PCR only
- 71 (52%) positive by IgM only
- 51 (38%) positive by both assays

## RAPID COMMUNICATIONS

# Detection of Zika virus RNA in whole blood of imported Zika virus disease cases up to 2 months after symptom onset, Israel, December 2015 to April 2016

Y Lustig<sup>1</sup>, E Mendelson<sup>1,2</sup>, N Paran<sup>3</sup>, S Melamed<sup>3</sup>, E Schwartz<sup>4</sup>

1. Central Virology Laboratory, Ministry of Health, Tel-Hashomer, Israel

Zika virus RNA presence in serum, whole-blood and urine samples from six Israeli travellers symptomatic for Zika virus disease was examined. Whole-blood samples were positive for as late as 2 months (58 days) post-symptom onset, longer than for urine (26 days) and serum (3 days). These findings suggest the utility of whole blood in Zika infection diagnosis.

| Patient number | Probable country of exposure | Serology results (IgM/IgG) <sup>a</sup> | First set of samples                                      |   |  | Second set of samples                                     |   |  |
|----------------|------------------------------|---|---|---|--|---|---|--|
|                |                              |   | qRT-PCR   |   |  | qRT-PCR   |   |  |
|                |                              |   | Serum result, days from symptom onset (pfu equivalent/ml) | Urine result, days from symptom onset (pfu equivalent/ml) | WB result, days from symptom onset (pfu equivalent/ml) | Serum result, days from symptom onset (pfu equivalent/ml) | Urine result, days from symptom onset (pfu equivalent/ml) | WB result, days from symptom onset (pfu equivalent/ml) |
| 1              | Colombia                     | ND                                      | Pos 3, (496)  | ND  | ND   | ND  | ND  | ND   |
| 2              | Colombia                     | Pos/Pos                                 | Neg, 5 (NA)   | Pos, 5 (16)   | Pos, 5 (88)  | Neg, 120 (NA)   | Neg, 120 (NA)   | Neg, 120 (NA)  |
| 3              | Colombia                     | Pos/Pos                                 | Neg, 10 (NA)  | Pos, 10 (12)  | Pos, 34 <sup>b</sup> (157)                             | Neg, 78 (NA)  | Neg, 78 (NA)  | Neg, 78 (NA)   |
| 4              | Vietnam                      | Pos/Neg                                 | Neg, 10 (NA)  | Neg, 10 (NA)  | Pos, 58 <sup>b</sup> (88)                              | Neg, 79 (NA)  | Neg, 79 (NA)  | Neg, 79 (NA)   |
| 5              | Dominican Republic           | Pos/Pos                                 | Neg, 26 (NA)  | Pos, 26 (20)  | Pos, 26 (47)   | Neg, 46 (NA)  | Neg, 46 (NA)  | Pos, 46 (29)   |
| 6              | Mexico                       | Neg/Neg                                 | Neg, 26 (NA)  | Neg, 26 (NA)  | Pos, 26 (496)  | Neg, 48 (NA)  | Neg, 48 (NA)  | Neg, 48 (NA)   |



# Summary & Future Directions for NAT Testing

- RT-PCR testing has limited utility for testing patient population in USA (travelers)
- Serum & urine testing should both be performed
- RT-PCR negative samples should be tested by IgM ELISA
- Whole blood testing?

# Zika: Available NAT Tests

- **Abbott RealTime Zika assay (Abbott Molecular)**
- **Zika ELITe MGB® Kit (ELITechGroup Inc.)**
- **Trioplex Real-time RT-PCR Assay (CDC)**
- **Zika Virus Detection by RT-PCR Test (ARUP Laboratories)**
- **Sentosa® SA ZIKV RT-PCR Test (Vela Diagnostics USA, Inc.)**
- **LightMix® Zika rRT-PCR Test (Roche Molecular Systems, Inc.)**
- **xMAP® MultiFLEX™ Zika RNA Assay (Luminex Corporation)**
- **VERSANT® Zika RNA 1.0 Assay (kPCR) Kit (Siemens Healthcare Diagnostics Inc .)**
- **Zika Virus Real-time RT-PCR Test (Viracor-IBT Laboratories, Inc.)**
- **Aptima® Zika Virus Assay (Hologic, Inc.)**
- **RealStar® Zika Virus RT-PCR Kit U.S. (Altona Diagnostics)**
- **Zika Virus RNA Qualitative Real-Time RT-PCR (Focus Diagnostics)**
  - **Blood Screening NAT: <5 copies/ml**
  - **Diagnostic NAT: 35-400 copies/ml**

# Flavivirus Serology: Welcome to the Hall of Mirrors

*Karl Johnson: “Flaviviruses are an antigenic hall of mirrors.”*



JOURNAL OF VIROLOGY, Jan. 2011, p. 410–421  
0022-538X/11/\$12.00 doi:10.1128/JVI.01826-10  
Copyright © 2011, American Society for Microbiology. All Rights Reserved.

Vol. 85, No. 1

## An In-Depth Analysis of Original Antigenic Sin in Dengue Virus Infection<sup>∇</sup>

Claire M. Midgley,<sup>1</sup> Martha Bajwa-Joseph,<sup>1</sup> Sirijitt Vasanawathana,<sup>2</sup> Wanee Limpitikul,<sup>3</sup>  
Bridget Wills,<sup>4</sup> Aleksandra Flanagan,<sup>5</sup> Emily Waiyaiya,<sup>1</sup> Hai Bac Tran,<sup>1</sup>  
Alison E. Cowper,<sup>1</sup> Pojchong Chotiyarnwon,<sup>1,7</sup> Jonathan M. Grimes,<sup>5</sup>  
Sutee Yoksan,<sup>6</sup> Prida Malasit,<sup>7,8</sup> Cameron P. Simmons,<sup>4</sup>  
Juthathip Mongkolsapava,<sup>1,7\*</sup> and Gavin R. Screaton<sup>1\*</sup>

“Dengue seems to be an extreme example of original antigenic sin, where the secondary response is entirely constructed from antibody that cross-reacts with previously encountered virus.”

*Am. J. Trop. Med. Hyg.*, 2011, 85(3), pp. 154–156  
Copyright © 2011 by The American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene

## ORIGINAL ANTIGENIC SIN IN DENGUE

SCOTT B. HALSTEAD, SUNTHAREE ROJANASUPHOT, AND NADHIRAT SANGKAWIBHA

*Department of Tropical Medicine and Medical Microbiology, University of Hawaii School of Medicine, 3675 Kilauaea Avenue, Honolulu, Hawaii 96816, and Virus Research Institute, Department of Medical Sciences, Ministry of Public Health, Bangkok, Thailand*

**Abstract.** Sequential blood samples were obtained from eight Thai children before, during and 3–5 months after hospitalization for dengue shock syndrome. All patients experienced a secondary-type antibody response as evidenced by hemagglutination-inhibition antibody responses in acute and convalescent sera. Dengue 2 viruses were recovered from two patients. In their pre-illness blood sample, all children had monotypic neutralizing antibodies; five to dengue 1, two to dengue 3 and one to dengue 4. The highest neutralizing antibody titers in acute phase and late convalescent sera were to the initial infecting virus type. This report documents for sequential dengue infections the existence of an original antigenic sin antibody response. It may be possible to apply this phenomenon to identify initial dengue serotype infection in individuals experiencing secondary dengue infections, thus helping to clarify the antecedents to dengue shock syndrome.

The Doctrine of Original Antigenic Sin was described and named by Francis and co-workers in the influenza hemagglutination-inhibition (HI) antibody test system.<sup>1–3</sup> Infection in previously immunized individuals with non-dengue serotypes of dengue, Thailand (population 52,329). Between January and April 1980, finger-tip blood samples were collected on filter paper strips from 4,136 children, ages <1 through 14 years. During 1980, eight of these children were hospitalized with or

“Highest PRNT titers after the second infections correspond to the serotypes in the first infections”

# Zika Virus Serology Testing: The Problems

- **Cross-Reactivity.** Humoral immune response generates antibodies (IgM & IgG) that predominately react with cross-reactive epitopes on the E glycoprotein.
- **Original Antigenic Sin.** In a second flavivirus infection, the antibodies generated are primarily directed against the E protein of the primary flavivirus infection
- **Antibody Dependent Enhancement.** Non-neutralizing antibodies from the first dengue infection bind to a heterotypic dengue virus and *enhance* infection of cells via Fc receptors.

# Zika Virus Serology: Available Tests

- IgM Capture ELISA (envelope protein)
  - CDC IgM capture ELISA
  - ZIKV Detect™ IgM Capture ELISA (InBios)
  
- Plaque Reduction Neutralization Test



# Data From Zika Epidemic 2015-2016

## Primary Zika Infection

| Patient ID (Day Post-Onset) | IgM ELISA Zika | IgM ELISA DEN | PRNT-90% Zika | PRNT-90% DEN-1 | PRNT-90% DEN-2 |
|-----------------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| 726(D17)                    | POS            | NEG           | 1:10,240      | NEG            | NEG            |
| 698 (D6)                    | POS            | POS           | 1:20480       | NEG            | NEG            |



**In a primary Zika infection:**

**28% samples cross-react in the Zika IgM ELISA (n≈250)**

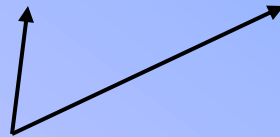
**CONCLUSION: Primary Zika infections cross-react in the IgM ELISA yet can be diagnosed accurately by utilizing the PRNT.**

# Data From Zika Epidemic 2015-2016

## Secondary Infection

| Patient ID (Day Post-Onset) | IgM ELISA Zika | IgM ELISA DEN | PRNT-90% Zika | PRNT-90% DEN-1 | PRNT-90% DEN-2 |
|-----------------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| 675(D5)**                   | POS            | NEG           | 1:160         | 1:5120         | 1:80           |
| 004(D7)**                   | POS            | POS           | 1:160         | 1:5120         | 1:320          |

\*\* Zika PCR POS



**In a secondary flavivirus (Zika) infection:**

**53% samples cross-react in the Zika IgM ELISA (n≈500)**

**CONCLUSION:** In secondary flavivirus infections, IgM and PRNT testing is unable to determine the recently infecting virus.

# Data From Zika Yap Epidemic 2007

Primary

Secondary

Table 2. Neutralization testing with heterologous flaviviruses of patients infected with ZIKV, Yap State, Micronesia, 2007\*

| Patient                              | Days after onset | PRNT <sub>90</sub> titer |        |        |        |       |     |       |     |       |       |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|--------|--------|--------|-------|-----|-------|-----|-------|-------|
|                                      |                  | ZIKV                     | DENV1  | DENV2  | DENV3  | DENV4 | JEV | YFV   | WNV | SLEV  | MVEV  |
| Primary flavivirus ZIKV              |                  |                          |        |        |        |       |     |       |     |       |       |
| 822a                                 | 5                | 320                      | <10    | <10    | <10    | <10   | <10 | <10   | <10 | <10   | <10   |
| 822b                                 | 10               | 2,560                    | 10     | 10     | 10     | 10    | <10 | <10   | <10 | <10   | <10   |
| 822c                                 | 24               | 5,120                    | 10     | 10     | 10     | 10    | <10 | <10   | <10 | <10   | <10   |
| 830a                                 | 2                | <10                      | <10    | NT‡    | NT     | NT    | NT  | NT    | NT  | NT    | NT    |
| 830b                                 | 21               | 2,560                    | <10    | <10    | <10    | <10   | <10 | <10   | <10 | <10   | <10   |
| 849a                                 | 3                | <10                      | <10    | <10    | <10    | <10   | <10 | <10   | <10 | <10   | <10   |
| 849b                                 | 18               | 10,240                   | <10    | <10    | <10    | <10   | <10 | 20    | <10 | <10   | <10   |
| 862a                                 | 6                | 320                      | <10    | <10    | <10    | <10   | <10 | <10   | <10 | <10   | <10   |
| 862b                                 | 20               | 2,560                    | 10     | 10     | <10    | <10   | <10 | <10   | <10 | 10    | <10   |
| Secondary flavivirus ZIKV (probable) |                  |                          |        |        |        |       |     |       |     |       |       |
| 817a                                 | 1                | 80                       | 80     | 160    | 320    | 160   | <10 | <10   | <10 | 40    | 40    |
| 817b                                 | 19               | 10,240                   | 2,560  | 20,480 | 5,120  | 5,120 | 20  | 320   | 160 | 1,280 | 640   |
| 833a                                 | 1                | 160                      | 320    | 80     | 40     | 20    | <10 | <10   | <10 | <10   | <10   |
| 833b                                 | 19               | 81,920                   | 20,480 | 5,120  | 5,120  | 1,280 | <10 | <10   | 80  | 320   | 320   |
| 844a                                 | 2                | 20                       | 1,280  | 640    | 320    | 160   | <10 | <10   | 5   | 20    | 20    |
| 844b                                 | 16               | 10,240                   | 40,980 | 10,240 | 5,120  | 1,280 | 5   | <10   | 160 | 640   | 640   |
| 955a                                 | 1                | 40                       | 1,280  | 640    | 160    | 320   | <10 | <10   | <10 | 20    | 20    |
| 955b                                 | 14               | 163,840                  | 81,920 | 20,480 | 10,240 | 5,120 | 10  | <10   | 640 | 2,560 | 1,280 |
| 968a                                 | 1                | 80                       | 320    | 320    | 80     | 40    | <10 | <10   | <10 | 40    | 20    |
| 968b                                 | 3                | 10,240                   | 640    | 640    | 160    | 160   | <10 | <10   | 10  | 40    | 20    |
| 839a                                 | 3                | <10                      | <10    | 10     | <10    | <10   | <10 | 40    | <10 | <10   | <10   |
| 839b                                 | 20               | 10,240                   | 40     | 320    | 80     | 80    | <10 | 640   | 40  | 80    | 80    |
| 847a                                 | 5                | <10                      | <10    | <10    | <10    | <10   | <10 | 640   | <10 | <10   | <10   |
| 847b                                 | 8                | 2,560                    | 40     | 320    | 160    | 40    | <10 | 1,280 | 80  | 320   | 320   |

\*PRNT<sub>90</sub> titer, 90% plaque reduction neutralization test titer; ZIKV, Zika virus; DENV, dengue virus; JEV, Japanese encephalitis virus; YFV, yellow fever virus; WNV, West Nile virus; SLEV, St. Louis encephalitis virus; MVEV, Murray Valley encephalitis virus; NT, not tested (sample depleted).

# Testing of Neonates

| Patient ID<br>(Age, Days) | IgM ELISA<br>Zika | IgM ELISA<br>DEN | PRNT-90%<br>Zika | PRNT-90%<br>DEN-1 | PRNT-90%<br>DEN-2 |
|---------------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 053 (1)                   | NEG               | NEG              | 1:1280           | NEG               | NEG               |
| 182 (9)                   | NEG               | NEG              | 1:2560           | NEG               | NEG               |
| 934 (20)                  | NEG               | NEG              | 1:1280           | 1:1280            | 1:80              |

# Rare Exceptions

| Patient ID (Day Post-Onset) | IgM ELISA Zika | IgM ELISA DEN | PRNT-90% Zika | PRNT-90% DEN-1 | PRNT-90% DEN-2 |
|-----------------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| 109(D2)                     | POS            | NEG           | NEG           | 1:80           | 1:320          |

- IgM positive to Zika/IgM negative to dengue & PRNT positive to dengue only: 8/567 (1.4%).

# How Often Does the PRNT Identify Zika or Dengue Infection?

| LOCATION       | % IDENTIFIED ZIKA or DEN |
|----------------|--------------------------|
| USA            | 44%                      |
| USVI           | 29%                      |
| American Samoa | 16%                      |
| Puerto Rico    | 15%                      |

**CONCLUSION:** Identifying the flavivirus infection in flavivirus endemic areas by IgM/PRNT testing is difficult.

# Diagnosis of Zika Virus Infection by Serology

- IF: Zika virus is the first infection by a flavivirus:
  - IgM ELISA is fairly specific for Zika
  - Plaque reduction neutralization test shows  $\geq 4$ -fold higher titer to Zika
- IF: Zika virus is the second or subsequent infection:
  - IgM ELISA is not specific; cross-reactivity with other flaviviruses
  - PRNT shows high titers to many flaviviruses
  - Definitive diagnosis is not possible

# Future Directions for Zika Serology Testing

- IgM ELISA-envelope protein
  - Virus specific domain III
  - Cross-reactive epitope removal
  - Removal of cross-reactive antibodies
- IgM ELISA-NS1 protein
- Microsphere Immunoassay
  - Quantitative measure of Ab binding to various antigens should improve specificity



THANKS !!

