



CDC warnings drive spike in Zika testing

By Chelsea Rice | August 17, 2016

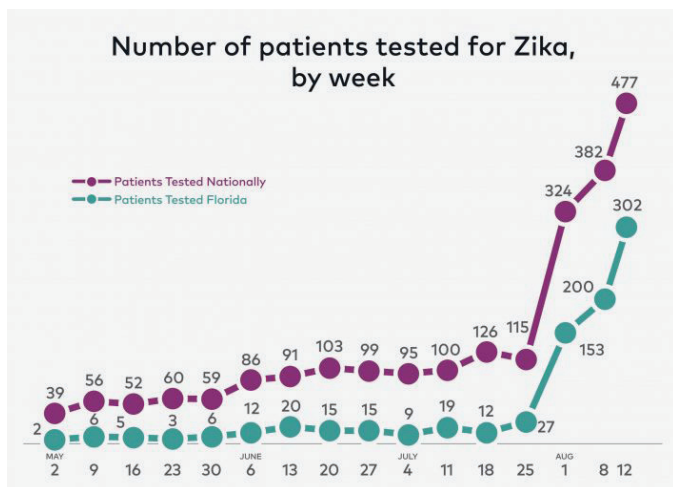
UPDATED, August 19: The number of patients requesting Zika tests across the United States has tripled since July 27 – and increased more than tenfold in Florida – as more cases of the virus have been confirmed, athenahealth data shows.

On Friday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advised pregnant women and their partners to avoid two zones in Miami where there has been active transmission of the Zika virus. Florida governor Rick Scott also confirmed five new cases of Zika in Miami Beach.

The first four patients with Zika in Florida were confirmed on July 29.

The number of patients on athenahealth's nationwide network who received Zika tests rose from 115 the week of July 25 to 477 the week of August 12. Over the same period in Florida, the number of Zika tests ordered rose from 27 to 302. A small portion of those tests have turned up positive results, though the precise number is unclear due to delays in testing and logging.

“The CDC’s warnings about Miami have clearly increased public anxiety and many more people are getting tested,” said Josh Gray, athenahealth’s vice president of research. “I expect this increase to continue as more tests increase the number of confirmed cases – especially if they’re found to have been mosquito-borne.”



So far, 75 percent of Zika tests are being ordered by OB/GYN and primary care physicians, athenahealth data shows. Most of those tests – 89 percent – are going to women ages 19 to 44. Men in the same age range are the second-largest group. Patients on commercial insurance are receiving 76 percent of Zika tests.

athenahealth has partnered with Borinquen Health Care of Miami Dade, a federally qualified health center in the midst of the area most dramatically affected, to reach out to the more than 1,400 men and women who fall into at-risk age groups and may need to be tested.

Now, public health officials are keeping an eye on Louisiana, where severe flooding over the weekend is suspected to lead to an increase in the mosquito-borne virus.



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