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Orders for Abortion Pills Are Rising in Countries With Zika Outbreaks

Orders have even doubled in some countries.



GETTY



By Hannah Smothers Jun 23, 2016



After warnings that Zika can cause **severe birth defects** if contracted by women who are pregnant or trying to get pregnant, orders for abortion pills have rapidly increased in seven Latin American countries with Zika outbreaks, according to **a new study** released yesterday by the New England Journal of Medicine.

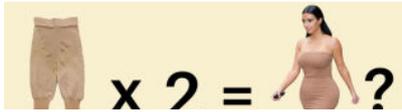
Since the Pan American Health Organization issued an epidemiologic alert for Zika in November 2015, orders for abortion pills have roughly doubled in Brazil, Ecuador, and Venezuela. Other Latin American countries saw similar increases. In Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Honduras, orders increased from 36 to 76 percent, according to **the study**.

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Among the study's authors is Rebecca Gomperts, a leader from **Women on Web** — a nonprofit that provides abortion pills mifepristone and misoprostol in places where doctor-administered abortions aren't available. While the demand for abortion pills in those Latin American countries with Zika outbreaks has increased dramatically, Women on Web hasn't seen a huge increase in pill orders from the region, **according to the *New York Times***. In the same time period since November 2015, Women on Web has received 2,300 pill orders, with about 1,600 coming from the countries where health authorities warned of Zika-related brain damage.

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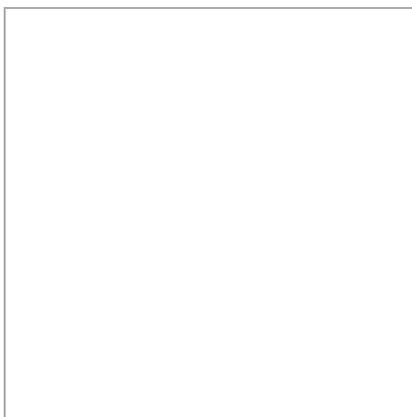
This lack in demand from Women on Web leads the study's researchers to believe women might be seeking out illegal abortions elsewhere, instead of receiving safe pills from the organization.

"Our approach may underestimate the effect of the advisories on demand for abortion, since many women may have used an unsafe method, accessed misoprostol from local pharmacies or the black market, or visited local underground providers," reads the study.

Another recent study, cited by Jezebel, found that around 6.5 million abortions are performed in Latin America and the Caribbean every year, and a large percentage of those abortions are carried out illegally. About 750,000 women are estimated to be treated for unsafe abortions in the region each year.

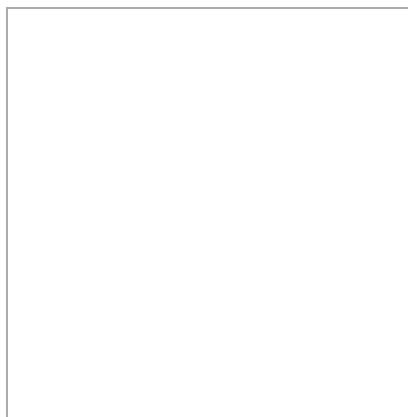
As Dr. Gilda Sedgh, the principle research scientist at the Guttmacher Institute, told the New York Times, the increased demand in pills could be an "early warning sign" of an increased demand for abortion in light of the Zika outbreaks.

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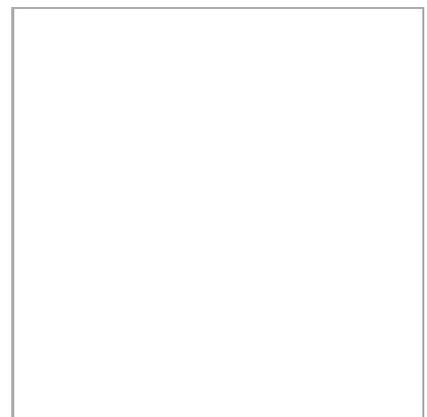
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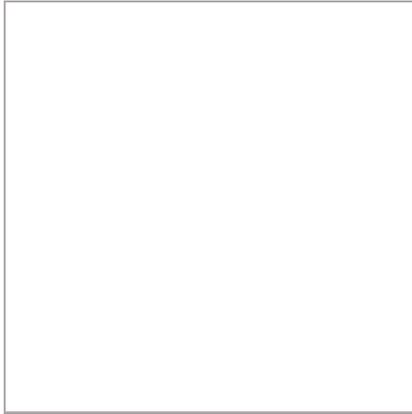
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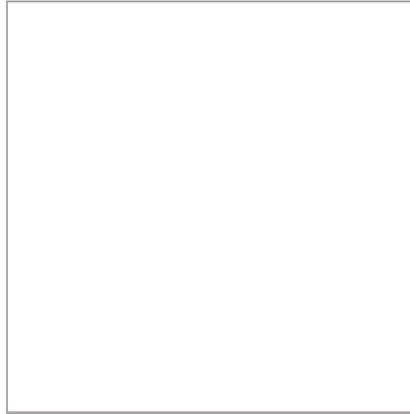
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