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Abortion Can Be Made Legal for Zika Cases in Thailand

By **SUZETTE GUTIERREZ-CACHILA (NEWS@GOSPELHERALD.COM)**

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A city worker fumigates the area to control the spread of mosquitoes at a temple in Bangkok, Thailand, September 14, 2016.

Reuters/Chaiwat Subprasom

The health department of Thailand announced abortion can be possible for cases of Zika virus infection.

The country's health experts met last week and decided to allow termination for serious birth defects linked to the virus for up to 24 weeks of pregnancy. However, this poses a challenge, as microcephaly is often detected in the later stages of pregnancy.

"The difficulty with Zika is to determine microcephaly. It is usually found later in pregnancy," Pisek Lumpikanon, president of the Royal Thai College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, [said](#). "Legal medical abortions can be done up to 24 weeks."

The procedure can only be carried out up to the 24th week because babies often have a good chance of survival beyond that, Lumpikanon said.

Abortion is illegal in Thailand except in certain cases, such as when the mother's health is at risk or when the pregnancy is a result of rape or incest.

Almost two weeks ago, the country confirmed its first two cases of microcephaly caused by Zika.

"We have found two cases of small heads linked to Zika, the first cases in Thailand," [announced](#) Prasert Thongcharoen, an adviser to the Department of Disease Control.

A couple of weeks ago, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a travel advisory for pregnant women to avoid going to 11 Southeast Asian countries including Thailand. The other countries in the list are Indonesia

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"Pregnant women traveling to Southeast Asia could become infected with Zika virus. The level of this risk is unknown and likely lower than in areas where Zika virus is newly introduced and spreading widely," the CDC [advisory](#) said.

In the U.S., where more than 500 women could possibly be infected Zika, the spread of the virus has reignited the debate on late-term abortion, particularly in

the Southern states.

“The Zika crisis makes it impossible to ignore the need for full access to safe, affordable and effective reproductive health care options for women — no matter where they live,” Chris Zahn, Vice President of Practice Activities for the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, [said](#).

In Latin America, the region most affected by the virus, requests for abortion have gone up, and these were largely due to Zika, according to a study released in July.

The researchers looked at abortion requests from Women on Web, a group that provides abortion pills to women, and found an increase of 36 to 108 percent in countries where the virus is known to be spreading and abortion was illegal.

The women were asked if the reason for the abortion request was because of Zika virus concerns.

“In Latin American countries that issued complications associated with Zika virus WoW increased significantly,” the research

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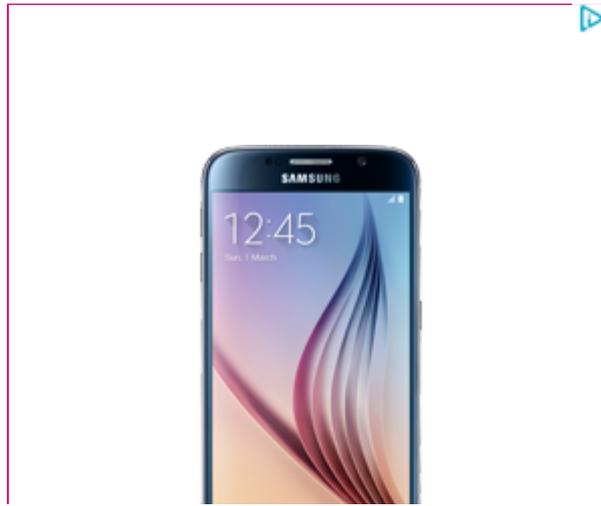


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