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COMUNICADO DE PRENSA

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(San Juan, Puerto Rico, June 5, 2017) – Zika transmission has substantially decreased in Puerto Rico below epidemic levels, and the Puerto Rico Department of Health (PRDH) has declared that the 2016 Zika epidemic is over.

Zika levels have substantially decreased since the same reporting period in 2016, with approximately 10 cases reported in each four-week period since April 2017, which is down from >8,000 cases reported in a four-week period at the peak of the epidemic in August 2016. These updated cases, as well as the reporting and testing methodologies by laboratories run by the PRDH have been confirmed and reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and CDC and PRDH will also continue to collaborate on consistent case definitions and reporting of Zika virus cases in 2017 and beyond, according to Dr. Carmen Deseda, State Epidemiologist.

“While there are very low levels of mosquito-borne Zika transmission now, it is important that we remain vigilant to keep these numbers down and support families already affected by Zika,” said Dr. Deseda.

Since 2016, the PRDH and CDC have been strongly collaborating to control the outbreak and prevent further long-, and short-term public health consequences. “PRDH has been committed to a strong public health response,” said Dr. Rafael Rodríguez-Mercado, Secretary of Health.



GOBIERNO DE PUERTO RICO

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“In coordination with the CDC, we have put in place a comprehensive program focused on preparation, prevention, precaution and surveillance,” said Dr. Rodriguez-Mercado. “These efforts can be used as a model for other regions experiencing local Zika virus transmission.”

“Puerto Rico has a very strong surveillance system. This will allow Puerto Rico to continue to monitor the number of Zika virus cases, and be ready to rapidly respond to any changing situation,” said Dr. Rodriguez-Mercado.

"We are pleased that the peak of the Zika virus outbreak in Puerto Rico has come to a close," said CDC Acting Director Anne Schuchat, MD. “However, we cannot let our guard down. CDC will continue to focus on protecting pregnant women and work closely with PRDH to support comprehensive Zika surveillance and prevention efforts on the Island.”

Prevention and control activities include strengthening surveillance and laboratory capacity, and carrying out mosquito control. The highest priorities and responsibilities include continuing to improve active surveillance systems, and strengthening capacity to ensure that all pregnant women are closely monitored and screened throughout each trimester of their pregnancy for Zika, and that monitoring and appropriate care is provided for their babies. “It is because of the strong actions of the people of Puerto Rico that 2016 cases decreased, therefore the people of Puerto Rico will need to continue to work together to prevent future cases,” said Dr. Rodriguez-Mercado.

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