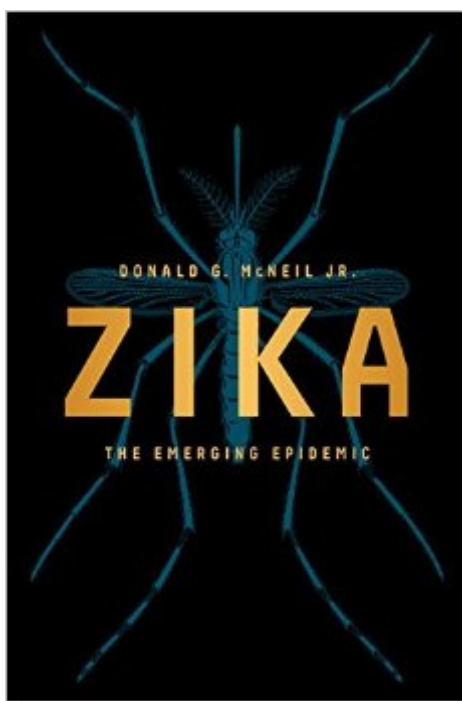


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# Zika: The Emerging Epidemic



## Synopsis

A gripping narrative about the origins and spread of the Zika virus by New York Times science reporter Donald G. McNeil Jr. Until recently, Zika—once considered a mild disease—was hardly a cause for global panic. But as early as August 2015, doctors in northeast Brazil began to notice a trend: many mothers who had recently experienced symptoms of the Zika virus were giving birth to babies with microcephaly, a serious disorder characterized by unusually small heads and brain damage. By early 2016, Zika was making headlines as evidence mounted—and eventually confirmed—that microcephaly is caused by the virus, which can be contracted through mosquito bites or sexually transmitted. The first death on American soil, in February 2016, was confirmed in Puerto Rico in April. The first case of microcephaly in Puerto Rico was confirmed on May 13, 2016. The virus has been known to be transmitted by the *Aedes aegypti* or Yellow Fever mosquito, but now *Aedes albopictus*, the Asian Tiger mosquito, has been found to carry it as well, which means it might affect regions as far north as New England and the Great Lakes. Right now, at least 298 million people in the Americas live in areas conducive to Zika transmission, according to a recent study. Over the next year, more than 5 million babies will be born. In *Zika: The Emerging Epidemic*, Donald G. McNeil Jr. sets the facts straight in a fascinating exploration of Zika's origins, how it's spreading, the race for a cure, and what we can do to protect ourselves now.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Gets you the information to March 2014, very good, I did research with *Aedes aegypti* in the 00's in

grad school and have worked in medical research it answered my questions. Gave me a way to talk to clients about medical issues.

...you should read this book. It is the clearest description of the way the current issues with Zika have been managed by governmental health agencies. As a practicing OB/GYN, I learned a lot from this book. The Q&A at the end is one of the clearest presentations of the facts about Zika that I have seen.

This book is a fast, entertaining, scientifically accurate look into not only a new epidemic, but also the churning sausage factory of public health policy. Donald McNeil brings years worth of experience as a global public health writer for the New York Times to tell the story about science marching on, with politics and ideology as lead weights around its ankles. Any book about a disease has a certain things it must do, like explain the key experiments leading to its discovery, or the clinical effects on patients—and McNeil does this faithfully. But where this book excels is in telling how the majordomos of public health at the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control, possessing magisterial arrogance and often ignorance, connive to shape what the public thinks about diseases. As a result, when these organizations issue public health advice for the public, it can be to serve particular agenda or ideology that is totally at odds with straightforward health protection. They do this even if science and ethics point to different advice entirely. In Chapter 11 of the book, which is the best, McNeil explains how after Zika virus was proved to cause brain damage and deaths in fetuses, WHO and CDC dissembled to avoid saying that women should consider delaying pregnancy while the epidemic was on a tear. He unpacks the extreme irony where CDC advised pregnant American women to skip going to Puerto Rico because of the danger of birth defects, but opposed telling Puerto Rican women to delay pregnancy while the epidemic remained underway, not for any scientific reason but because a narrow-minded martinet of a CDC gynaecologist ideologically resented interfering with women's freedom of choice. Not only was CDC's hypocrisy hideously racist—female American tourists being given the best and safest public health advice, while brown Puerto Rican inhabitants were told something else entirely—but it surely led and is continuing to lead to some number of dead or brain damaged Puerto Rican children. WHO made the same mistake, but on an even larger, global level, again because of freedom of choice. On the contrary, in their propagandizing paternalism, both CDC and WHO have forgotten what freedom of choice with "informed consent" actually means: that patients must be apprised of absolutely ALL the options so that they can decide freely. By avoiding to tell

women that the surest, strongest way to avoid a brain damaged baby was to delay pregnancy until the Zika outbreak passed, CDC and WHO actually robbed them of free, informed choice—”which is shockingly unethical. Doubtless McNeil’s telling will offend some. Who cares: truth is often offensive when it is important. It’s only too telling that another reviewer on , who froths at the mouth about McNeil’s account, never identifies a single page, paragraph or sentence of his book that is erroneous or incorrect. It therefore has to be taken as bang-on accurate, albeit disturbingly so. For that alone, this book reminds me of other classics told from the coal face of disease, such as Randy Shilts’ *And the Band Played On*, and it worth reading so that you are properly skeptical of CDC or WHO confidence tricks in the future.

This short, concise book about Zika written by a medical journalist is a fascinating read for the average person. The author traces the history of Zika and its spread throughout the world. He looks at Zika’s place among viruses, assesses the current situation and possibilities for the future. It’s a light read filled with self and interesting information. This is definitely a worthwhile read.

In light of all the recent news circulating about Zika, I thought this would be an interesting and informative summer read. I found the book to be extremely easy to read and understand, even though I do not have a medical background. I was fascinated by all the information it contained, but I also enjoyed the author’s flair held within its pages.

This book was, overall, a fascinating read, and I highly recommend it to anyone who is interested in the history of Zika. The writing is snappy and very well-paced. That being said, Chapter 11, "Delaying Pregnancy", was bad, bad, bad. The author makes some astonishingly terrible choices about how to discuss some extremely delicate issues, namely, the recommendation that women avoid pregnancy in countries where Zika is spreading. He adopts a paternalistic and scolding tone towards women at several points in the chapter, grossly misrepresents the issue, and completely misses the point as to why telling women to avoid pregnancy is making many people very, very angry- it is because women in these countries are not routinely allowed anything close to autonomy over their lives and bodies. They remain less than human in the eyes of the law, and telling them to "avoid pregnancy" is a useless recommendation. They can’t- sexual violence is commonplace, in relationships and marriages as well. These crimes aren’t prosecuted, they’re utterly commonplace. The author’s inability to understand this is pathetic, his arguments are offensive and weak. It’s a glaring oversight in an otherwise great book.

The author does a very good presenting the information in an easy to understand format. This virus has been around since the 1940's, it's just now reaching the Americas.

Well-written and an important read for anyone who wants to understand mosquito-borne diseases just a bit better.

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