

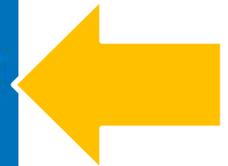
# Zika Response: Public Health Risk Communication

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PCI

# Public Health Risk Communication –a component of Emergency Operational Response Plans

-  **Surveillance**
-  **Community engagement & risk communication**
-  **Vector control & personal protection**
-  **Care for those affected**
-  **Research**
-  **Coordination**



# What is public health risk communication?

“Risk communication is the real-time exchange of information, advice and opinions between experts, community leaders, or officials and the people who are at risk.”

“The ultimate purpose is to enable everyone at risk to take informed decisions to act to protect themselves and others from infection and mitigate the effects of Zika virus and its potential complications.”

**Real time communication**



**Between experts, leaders and people at risk**



**To enable informed decisions to prevent infection and complications**

# Is it BCC? is it different?

- It uses the same principles of DBC/BCC, in the context of responding to an emergency, and addressing specific prevention/control needs.
- Proactively addresses fears, myths, misinformation that affect prevention and care.
- Helps establish communication mechanisms between affected or at risk communities and response coordination teams.
- Requires very close collaboration with other components of the response plan.



# Why is risk communication important?

## IMPROVES PREVENTION

- Effective, coordinated and integrated risk communication strategies help reduce risk and increase protection and prevention.

## FOSTERS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TO IMPLEMENT/AMPLIFY RESPONSE

- Appropriate community engagement supports surveillance, response and research efforts.

## BUILDS LOCAL OWNERSHIP

- It has an emphasis on empowering those most affected or at risk, and on building local ownership.



\*Crisis and emergency risk communication  
– Barbara Reynolds, Ph.D. Zika Action Plan meeting, CDC. April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016.



# Key aspects of Risk Communication...

- Risk communication addresses not only **facts**, but also **risks** and the **perceptions** and **fears** that co-exist with the risk.
- Risk **communication needs can change** considerably from one stage of the outbreak to the next.
- Communication strategies must **adapt** to new needs and realities.



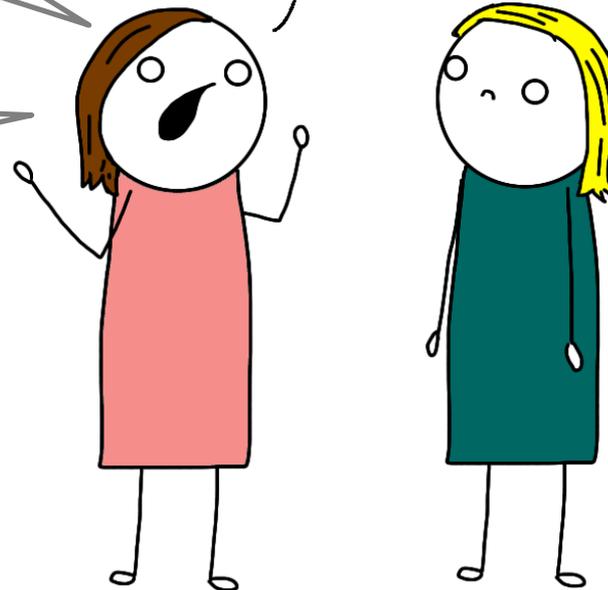
# Evolving science → changing messages

Studies support the conclusion that there is a link between Zika and microcephaly

Zika produces “a range of neurological disorders’ including microcephaly and Guillain-Barre syndrome.

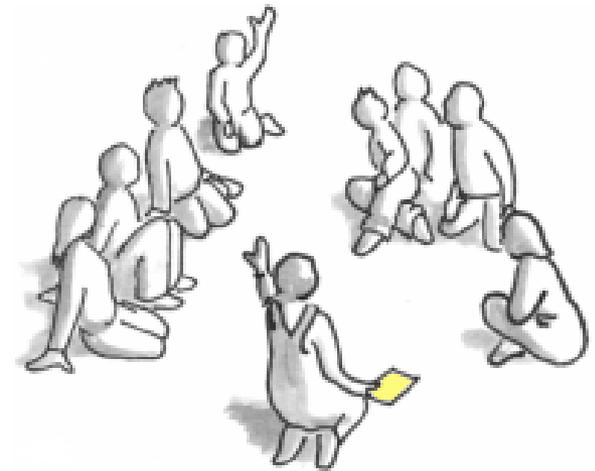
Zika infection might be linked to microcephaly

Blah, blah, blah, blah...



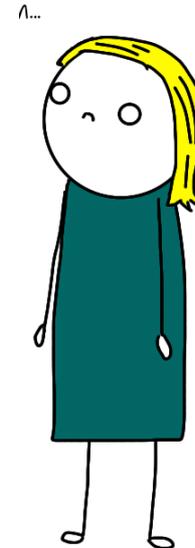
# How can risk communication help empowerment, local ownership?

- Take advantage of existing communication mechanisms.
- Engage the right local leaders, experts and decision-makers.
- Strengthen local capacity to communicate.
- Develop/strengthen capacity in data analysis and decision-making –at different levels.
- Clearly articulate the needs of the response process. What is it we are trying to accomplish? How? By whom? With whom? With what?
- Appropriately engage with other aspects of the response (e.g. vector control).



# What the public seeks--

- To 'make sense' of what is happening.
- "Go back to normal" as soon as possible.
- To be able to make informed decisions, based on knowledge, beliefs, etc.
- To be an active participant in the solution based on readiness, capacity, access, etc.



# Your communication efforts should address key determinants of behavior change



Some of their questions to you:

- Are me and my family safe?
- What is it that may affect me?
- What can I do to protect myself and my family?
- Who caused this?

Perceived:

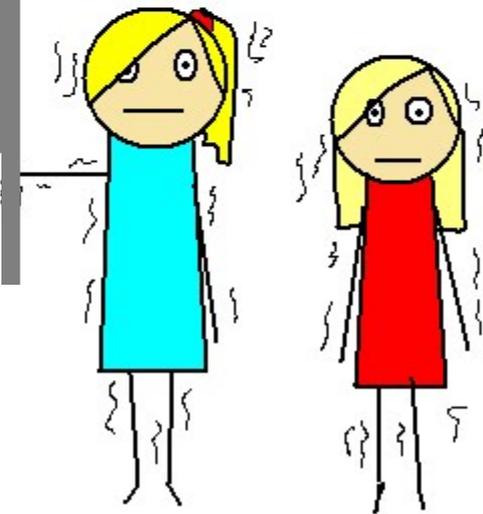
- Self-efficacy and skills.
- Social norms.
- Negative consequences.
- Action-efficacy.
- Susceptibility or risk.
- Severity.
- Divine will.
- Cues for action.

Plus: policies, culture and access issues.

# Psychological barriers that might affect prevention:

**Denial. Fear. Anxiety,  
Confusion. Hopelessness  
and helplessness. Panic.**

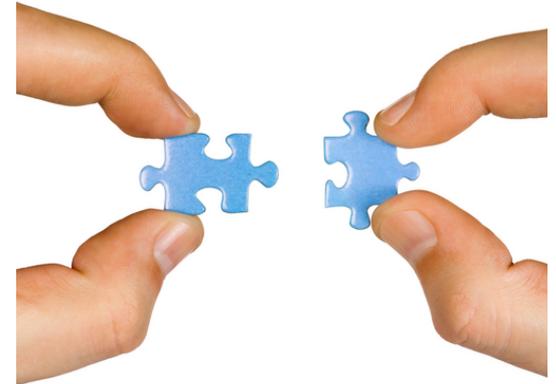
Don't ignore or deny fear:  
acknowledge it, and provide  
contextual information.



# For effective communication

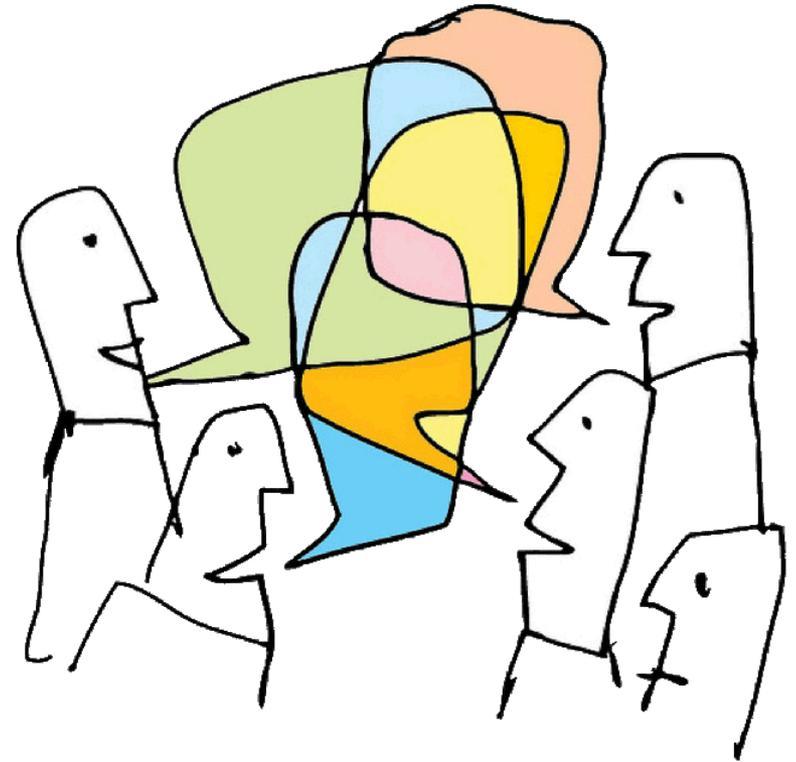
## You and Your partners should...

- Establish/participate in coordination mechanisms.
- Harmonize/Agree on key messages.
- Follow agreed-upon or mandated Global, International and Country-level protocols.
- Work together, as appropriate.
- Share relevant data.
- (Try to) Present a 'common front'.



# Communication failures:

- Mixed messages from multiple experts.
- Absence of information or delayed messages.
- Paternalistic attitudes.
- Not addressing or countering rumors and myths in real time.
- Power struggles made public.



Crisis and emergency risk communication –Barbara Reynolds, Ph.D. Zika  
Action Plan meeting, CDC. April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016.

# Functions required for successful risk communication.

- **Translational communication** --so science and technical knowledge can be understood.
- **Listening systems** –to stay connected to people’s concerns and fears that can act as barriers for prevention and care.
- **Public and institutional communication** at global, national and regional levels.
- **Community engagement:** to ensure adoption of preventive behaviors, and to promote ownership of the response.



# Example: Engaging your audience, and having them help ‘translate’ technical info

- CDC research in Puerto Rico related to ZIKV.
- Qualitative research study to
  - Identify what people (pregnant women) know
  - Test messages/materials (participants asked to react to drawings/messages).
  - Rank a list of 12 behaviors from ‘most important, most able to put into practice’ to ‘least important or least able to put into practice’.
- Through focus groups and in-depth interviews.

## Removing standing water

### Removing Standing Water where Mosquitoes Grow From Eggs To Larvae To Pupae To Adults



### Perceived advantages

- *If water is thrown away, there is no risk of having eggs, larvae, adults.*
- *That it's good because the water is the primary nest for the mosquitoes.*

### Perceived disadvantages

- *It is not difficult. Sometimes it is the laziness from people. I can do it but if my neighbors don't do it, we don't make any progress.*
- *There should be a fine, so that there is economic pressure. There need to be penalties because there are people who won't pay attention.*

“Puerto Rican Pregnant Women’s Assessment of Vector Control Strategies and Personal Protective Behaviors for Zika Prevention”. Preliminary Report. International Risk Communication Partners Group. April 11, 2016. CDC.

# Examples –facts and messages that might require contextualization:

- No ZIKV treatment or vaccine exists.
- Zika is prevented by avoiding mosquito bites.
- It is also spread through sex, from mother to child, and potentially through blood transfusions.
- Mosquitos that spread Zika mostly bite during the daytime.
- These mosquitos can also spread dengue and chikungunya viruses.

## Prevention:

- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Stay in places with air conditioning, or with window and door screens.
- Sleep under mosquito bed nets.
- Use EPA-registered insect-repellents, except on babies younger than 2 months of age.
- If you have Zika, avoid mosquitos bites the first week of illness.
- Use condoms every time you have sex.
- If you are a man and have traveled through an area with Zika, it is recommended you prevent mosquito bites for 3 weeks.

<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/prevention/index.html>

# For ZIKV risk communication, consider these:

## **Audiences:**

- Pregnant women
- Health workers/  
response teams
- Travelers
- General public
- Media
- Relevant stakeholders  
and decision-makers

## **Content:**

- General information.
- Symptoms, diagnosis,  
treatment options.
- Prevention/protection.
- Transmission and risks.
- Vector surveillance and  
control.
- Access to services.

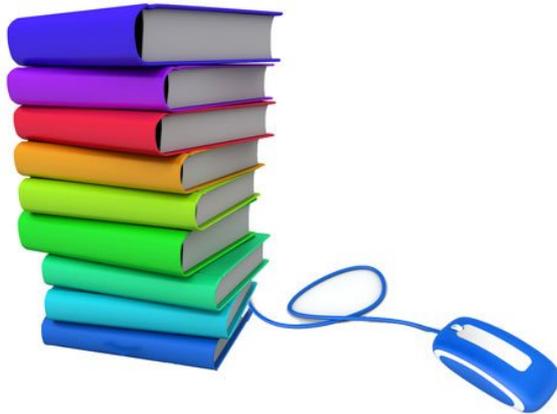
# Public Health Risk Communication Channels

- Mass, digital media (radio, T.V., etc.)
- Social media.
- Face to face, home visits, group conversations.
- Community forums, dialogues, etc.
- Workshops/trainings.
- Mechanisms that promote:
  - Local understanding
  - Perceptions and fears being addressed.
  - Feedback mechanisms to inform messages and materials.
  - Ongoing communication exchanges, as appropriate.
  - Support to other aspects of the response –surveillance, vector control, etc.



# -Thank You-

## References:



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- Puerto Rican Pregnant Women’s Assessment of Vector Control Strategies and Personal Protective Behaviors for Zika prevention. Preliminary Report. Christine E. Prue, International Risk Communication Partners Group-CDC. April 11, 2016.
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- Risk communication in the context of Zika virus Interim guidance. 1 March 2016 WHO/ZIKV/RCCE/16.1
- Zika strategic response framework and joint operations plan. WHO. Feb 2016.