

Chikungunya Presents Challenge for Health Care Services



Havana, January 26 (PL-RHC)-- Several months ago, health care authorities in the Americas sounded the alarm over the presence of a new viral disease: the Chikungunya fever, which is transmitted by mosquitoes and is characterized by a high fever and muscular pains.

Despite measures taken to prevent the spread of the disease, including border controls, the elimination of breeding grounds, fumigation with pesticides and campaigns, the number of patients continues in the rise.

According to the latest reports from the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), since the first case was reported in the western hemisphere, there have been 24,127 patients and more than 1,100,000 suspected cases.

Even though the disease is not deadly, complications have been reported in patients suffering from a base disease such as cancer, diabetes, obesity, asthma and high blood pressure. As a result, 172 deaths have been reported, especially in the Caribbean.

Some countries, such as Colombia, have reported more than 90,000 suspected cases and many other nations announced an epidemic, while El Salvador reports more than 500,000 cases and the Dominican Republic 500,000 suspected cases.

The disease is present in almost all Caribbean islands, and the United States has reported more than 2,000 cases, mainly patients who contracted the disease abroad.

The Chikungunya virus, which was first identified in Tanzania in 1952 and in the Americas in December 2013, is transmitted by the Aedes mosquito, particularly Aedes aegypti and Aedes albopictus. It has an incubation period of 3-7 days, and the disease can be acute, sub-acute and chronic.

The virus affects both men and women of all ages, according to PAHO. The symptoms are very similar to those caused by dengue fever, including headache, nausea, fatigue and a skin rash. It has no cure, so the treatment is aimed at relieving the symptoms, particularly the pain in the joints, which can become chronic.

The Chikungunya infection can generate antibodies that protect people for life. Achievements have been made to develop a vaccine, but it is still in an experimental stage.

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