



Zika Virus may harm adult brains, study says

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By: Marvin Harris

(RNN) - The Zika virus may harm adult brains similar to the way it harms the brains of babies, a new study suggests.

The mosquito-borne disease may damage the adult brain cells that help people learn and remember, according to researchers at The Rockefeller University and La Jolla Institute.

They described their study, published in *Cell Stem Cell* on August 18, as the first to look at the effect of the Zika virus on the adult brain.

"Based on our findings, getting infected with Zika as an adult may not be as innocuous as people think," said Joseph Gleeson, a co-author of the study.

He and scientists from the La Jolla Institute used the brains of mice in trying to determine whether the Zika virus could affect the same kind of cells in adults as they do in infants.

"Zika can clearly enter the brain of adults and can wreak havoc," said Sujan Shresta, a co-author and professor at La Jolla Institute. "... Yet the majority of adults who are infected with Zika rarely show detectable symptoms."

She said the effect of the Zika virus on the adult brain may be more subtle than on the babies' brains but now scientists know what signs to seek.

Researchers have linked the Zika virus in women to microcephaly, a birth defect that causes babies to have abnormally small heads and brains.

Except in newborns, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has said, the infection usually causes mild symptoms that last from several days to a week. The most common symptoms are headache, fever, red eyes, rash and joint pain.

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