

COMMUNITY VOICE

The Virus Next Time?

Take action against new viruses by making Hawaii less hospitable for mosquitoes.

OCTOBER 16, 2014 · By DAVID DUFFY

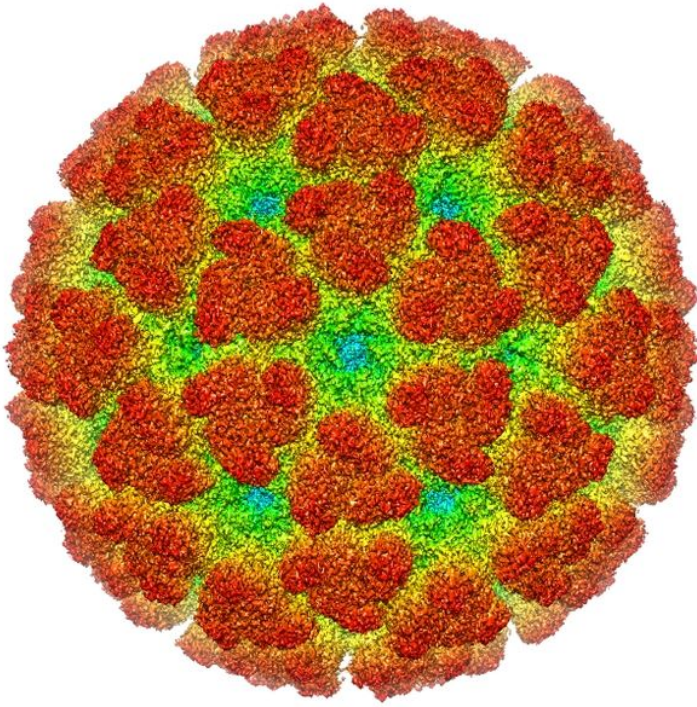
While the world's attention has been focused on the African outbreak of Ebola virus and whether it could spread to the rest of the planet, another fortunately less dangerous African virus, Chikungunya, is closer to home and much more likely to arrive in Hawaii. Chikungunya outbreaks are occurring in the Caribbean, American Samoa, Samoa, Tonga, Yap and Central America, and most recently Tahiti.

Unlike other diseases that pass from person to person, Chikungunya is spread by mosquitoes including the tiger mosquito *Aedes albopictus*, our common daytime “ankle-biter.” Within a week after a bite, the human victim may come down with a sudden high fever (greater than 102 degrees), intense muscle ache and sometimes a rash, symptoms similar to lots of other diseases.

As with most viruses there is no cure, but the disease is rarely fatal, although symptoms may persist for months. The very young, the old, and those with medical conditions are most at risk of complications.

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A single traveler from an outbreak location could transport the virus to the islands. While we can't keep all sick people out of Hawaii and not all sick people necessarily have Chikungunya, we can make it much more difficult for the disease to get established.



Patients with high fevers need to stay indoors in rooms with window screens and, if possible, air conditioning to discourage mosquitoes. They should see a doctor. Homeowners who don't have window screening should consider installing it. School classrooms represent buffets for mosquitoes, so screening schools in wet areas would help as would using mosquito repellents during the day as well as at dusk.

Tiger mosquitoes rarely travel more than 200 yards from their birthplace, so removing sources of stagnant water can reduce their populations, especially if whole

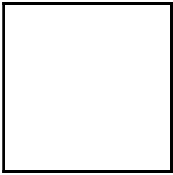
neighborhoods get involved. Old tires, discarded soft drink cans, flower pots, and gutters can all be breeding places, so drain or remove them. Guppies in garden ponds can also reduce mosquito breeding. There are new, but relatively expensive mosquito traps that are said to be effective against tiger mosquitoes.

Making our landscape more hostile for mosquitos could wait for the first reports of locally spread Chikungunya, or we could take action now.

It doesn't take much effort, and it has other payoffs such as reducing annoying mosquitoes when sitting on the lanai, and controlling heartworm, a disease that can cripple or kill dogs and is also spread by tiger mosquitoes. In addition, the dengue outbreak of 2001 in Hawaii was mainly spread by tiger mosquitoes, so why give dengue a second shot at Hawaii? Finally, the tiger mosquito can spread lymphatic filariasis also known as elephantiasis, which is endemic across the Pacific but not in Hawaii. After seeing even one photo of a victim of this disease, it is obvious why the islands are better off without it.

Diseases: we don't have them, we don't want them, so why give them a chance to get established?

About the Author



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David Duffy runs the Pacific Cooperative Studies Unit and is a professor in the Botany Department at the University of Hawaii Manoa. He has worked on the ecology of diseases including Lyme Disease, avian flu, and avian malaria in such places as Peru, Alaska, southern Africa, eastern Long Island, southern Africa and her in Hawaii. He received his Ph.D. in population biology from Princeton University.

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Dr. Lorrin Pang, Maui's Health officer is the only one I know of who has successfully eradicated Dengue Fever from an island which he did in 2001. His aggressive mosquito eradication program, coupled with community and tourist education turned the tide. He even went to Costco himself and bought mosquito repellent and placed it at the tourist stands along Hana Hwy so that tourists could apply it for free. That is the kind of creative and quick action that is to be applauded.

On the down side we have many doctors unfamiliar with Dengue who don't ask the right questions. Physicians if you are presented with a patient with fever, headache, bone aches ALWAYS ask them if they've just returned from Indonesia, Bali, Southeast Asia, South America or Puerto Rico. And especially if they complain of spots obscuring their sight or you ... [See More](#)

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Pls do a story on Ebola. I want to know what we are doing about it here in Hawaii. We see a lot of travel from all over the world.. what safety precautions do we have? and what are we doing to step it up?

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