

Press release

Biomnis mobilises efforts early in the face of the Zika epidemic

Lyon, 18 July 2016. In mainland France, monitoring of chikungunya and dengue virus has been in place since 2010 as part of the prevention plan relating to the risk of the spread of arboviruses. This year the plan also includes the Zika virus, in view of the epidemic which has been rife across South and Central America and the French overseas territories since December 2015.

The Zika virus is transmitted by a bite from a mosquito belonging to the genus *Aedes albopictus*. In a large number of cases infection with the virus can be asymptomatic, or it may present in the form of flu-like syndrome with, in general, moderate fever, a skin rash and sometimes joint and muscle pain, as well as conjunctival hyperaemia. In some cases, neurological complications in the form of Guillain-Barré polyradiculoneuritis have been observed. However, the situation regarding pregnancy remains the highest concern, because mother-to-child transmission is possible, with foetal malformations in the form of microcephaly. Moreover, it has now been demonstrated that the virus can be sexually transmitted (via sperm).

To address this issue, Biomnis has, since the start of this year and as a matter of urgency, been developing a "home-made" PCR method for biological testing for the Zika virus. This technique is consistent with the one used at the French National Centre for Arboviroses. This pathology test has been rapidly expanded to offer Zika testing based on different types of sample (cerebrospinal fluid, saliva, amniotic fluid and sperm) and a serology test to help diagnose complicated clinical forms.

With more than 70 dedicated employees and in particular its own "home-made" techniques, the Department of Infectious Diseases at Biomnis, led by Dr Véronique Jacomo, is one of the most important in Europe. Its infrastructure and high-tech equipment enable it to meet the challenges of any epidemic and respond to medical emergencies.

Working closely with the specialist French Reference Centres and health authorities, Biomnis is continuing its work relating to this arbovirus epidemic, reaffirming the laboratory's commitment to serving public health.

About Biomnis

Biomnis is the European leader in the sector of specialised medical pathology and carries out over 32,000 analyses per day from a range of over 2,500 tests available, including specialised tests for which the company has the appropriate authorisations.

Since it was founded in 1897 by Marcel Mérieux, Biomnis has had a long tradition of research and fighting to combat infectious diseases. Building on this historic legacy, the laboratory continues this excellence in the screening and diagnosis of infectious and tropical diseases. Its expertise is evidenced in particular by the development of its own PCR methods (H1N1, chikungunya, dengue, bilharzia, Zika, etc.).

Biomnis has been dedicated to medical testing for over 100 years and remains the reference service provider in the field of specialised medical pathology in France. It has kept its position through continuous technological innovation and investment, particularly in areas such as female biology, oncology and personalised medicine, as well as chromosomal and molecular genetics.

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