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Letters to the Editor

Long term persistence of Zika virus after the onset of symptoms



Persistencia a largo plazo del virus Zika después de la aparición de los síntomas

Dear Editor,

The recent publication on “long term persistence of Zika virus after the onset of symptoms” by Oliveira Souto et al. is very interesting.¹ Oliveira Souto et al. noted for “the persistence of Zika virus in semen samples for long periods after infection.” In fact, the sexual transmission of Zika infection is possible and the existence of the Zika virus in the semen is confirmed.¹ Nevertheless, there has never been any systematic report to study how long that the virus can remain in the reproductive system of the infected persons. As noted by Atkinson et al.,² “viral RNA clearance times are not consistent and can be prolonged.” In the endemic area, the asymptomatic Zika virus infection is very common and the contamination of virus in the semen is a big concern.^{3,4}

Focusing on the present report on the period of existence of virus in semen, there are some interesting concerns. First, the exact period of existence cannot be told. Since the onset of symptom of Zika virus infection can be at any time after getting contact with the pathogenic virus.⁵ Therefore, the actual period of semen contamination can be very long and longer than 93 days. Second,

the possibility that the patient get the repeated infection after the first onset cannot be ruled out. There is no proof that the identified virus in the semen in the mentioned case at the different period during follow-up is from the same origin.

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Reply to the letter: Long term persistence of Zika virus after the onset of symptoms



Respuesta a la carta: Persistencia a largo plazo del virus Zika después de la aparición de los síntomas

Dear Editor:

Thank you for your considerations on our study. Regarding your concerns, we indicate in the manuscript that “Unfortunately, samples between the third and the sixth month after symptomatic illness were not available for testing. We can only suggest that

somewhere between 93 and 201 dpi ZIKV RNA declined to undetectable levels” and therefore anticipate that the virus could have persisted in the semen of our patient for longer than 93 days.

In respect to the possibility that the patient could have been reinfected, we have to say that it would be extremely unlikely since reinfections have not been reported in the literature in contrast to viral persistence in semen. Experiments conducted in non-human primates support that ZIKV infection induces protective immunity.¹

Reference

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