A new study [2] published in the British health journal Lancet presents the strongest case to date that the Zika virus is linked to Guillain-Barré syndrome, which causes temporary paralysis. The study retrospectively looked at 42 cases of Guillain-Barré in French Polynesia that occurred between October 2013 and April 2014, the same time that French Polynesia experienced the largest Zika virus outbreak ever described at that time. While the research could not conclude that Zika was the cause of the Guillain-Barré cases, it strongly links the two.

The authors predict there could be one case of Guillain-Barré among every 4,000 people falling ill with Zika. The lead author, according to the BBC [3], said, "These patients tended to deteriorate more rapidly than we usually see with Guillain-Barré." Yet their recovery was better than other persons diagnosed with Guillain-Barré syndrome. None of the studied patients died, but even after several months some still needed help to walk.

The authors conclude "[b]ecause Zika virus is spreading rapidly across the Americas, at-risk countries need to prepare for adequate intensive care bed capacity to manage patients with Guillain-Barré syndrome."

For more, see the updated CSG infographic Zika Virus: Quick Facts for State Leaders [4].
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