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### A forum on the Zika virus

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[February 17, 2016](#)

## **A forum on the Zika virus**

By [Sudeepa Abeysinghe](#), [Luciana Brondi](#), [Ian Harper](#), [Hannah Lesshafft](#), [Lucy Lowe](#), [Alex Nading](#) and [Ting Ting Shum](#)

Zika is in the air.

The beginning of 2016 has seen the world thrust into another global infectious disease crisis, fanned by the politics and fear of uncertainty and media speculation. Reports of the Zika virus outbreak emerged in late 2015, and have proliferated in early 2016. Most distressing have been the headlines, and associated images, possibly linking the virus to babies born with a severely disabling condition, microcephaly. Originally sporadically found in [Africa and Asia](#), Zika was first detected in the western hemisphere in Northeast Brazil May 2015. Eight months later, 1.5 million instances of Zika infection have been found in Brazil, 4,000 babies with microcephaly, cases of the disease in 25 countries, and in January 2016, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the outbreak [a Public Health Emergency of International Concern](#) (PHEIC). The speed and rate at which information, images, numbers and possibilities, and most recently, declarations and conspiracy theories, have circulated has been dizzying.

On February 4, 2016, the [Edinburgh Centre for Medical Anthropology](#) (EdCMA) held a roundtable discussion chaired by [Ian Harper](#), director of the EdCMA and Wellcome Trust Senior Investigator, in order to unpack and better understand the various issues at stake in the current global health crisis. Five speakers examined Zika and its implications from differing perspectives. Of particular concern for the roundtable was to address how social scientists may approach the issues at stake. Here we present slightly edited versions of the roundtable presentations, as well as a summary of the discussion that followed:

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