

July 25, 2016

Dear CWRU Study Abroad Students and Community Members,

In January, the Office of Education Abroad issued a statement regarding the Zika virus, a mosquito borne virus that causes fever, rash, and other mild symptoms. The World Health Organization (WHO) has been following the development and spread of the Zika virus over the last year. While the virus has quickly spread throughout South and Central America, symptoms to date have been mild and hospitalization is rare, according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC).

At this time, Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) does not anticipate that any of our planned study abroad programs will be interrupted or postponed due to the Zika virus; however, we will continuously watch the situation, and we will not hesitate to suspend a program should we feel that the situation is unsafe. We are watching CDC and Department of State alerts as well as consulting study abroad best practice forums.

We do strongly encourage all students, faculty, and staff with plans to travel to Central or South America to read information on the Zika virus from the [CDC](#) and the [WHO](#) and consult the [Department of State travel advisories](#). In particular, this virus can affect women who are pregnant or who plan to get pregnant. Women in one of these categories, as well as their partners who may transmit the virus, should read the [CDC statements](#) and consult with their physicians in order to make an informed decision as to their participation in programs in affected areas.

The Office of Education Abroad closely watches the Department of State travel advisories and registers every group going abroad with the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program which provides alerts to students. Additionally, each faculty, staff, and student member traveling as a part of the university is covered under the university's supplemental medical insurance for international travel. Should anything happen while our students are abroad, we receive notifications and begin our process for confirming the safety of our students and for providing students support should they need it. Just like we cannot guarantee the health of students on campus, we also cannot guarantee the health of students who study abroad. However, we can assure students and parents that health, safety, and security are of upmost concern for our university, and we take every precaution to keep our students safe and informed.

I appreciate the concerns you may have about this emerging situation. Please feel free to contact me personally at any time to learn more or to express any concerns you might have. We are here to help our students have the best experiences possible!

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