

GM mosquitoes didn't cause Zika, but they can help stop it

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis.

A new ridiculous rumor is spreading around the internets. According to conspiracy theorists, the recent outbreak of Zika can be [blamed on the British biotech company Oxitec](#), which some are saying even *intentionally* caused the disease as a form of ethnic cleansing or population control. The articles all cite [a lone Redditor who proposed the connection on January 25th to the Conspiracy subreddit](#). “There are no biological free lunches,” says one commenter on the idea. “Releasing genetically altered species into the environment could have disastrous consequences” another added. “Maybe that’s what some entities want to happen...?”

The mosquito to blame for the outbreak—*Aedes aegypti*—doesn't belong in the Americas. It's native to Africa, and [was only introduced in the new world when Europeans began to explore the globe](#). In the 20th century, mosquito control programs nearly eradicated the unwelcome menace from the Americas (largely thanks to the use of the controversial pesticide DDT); as late as the mid 1970s, Brazil and 15 other nations were *Aedes aegypti*-free. But despite the successes, eradication efforts were halted, allowing the mosquito to regain its lost territory.

Effective control measures are expensive and difficult to maintain, so at the tail end of the 20th century and into the 21st, scientists began to explore creative means of controlling mosquito populations, including the use of genetic modification. Oxitec's mosquitoes are one of the most exciting technologies to have emerged from this period.

Read full, original post: [No, GM Mosquitoes Didn't Start The Zika Outbreak](#)