

Zika found in brain of fetus supports virus's role in brain damage, microcephaly

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The [Zika virus](#), thought to be responsible for a surge in birth defects in Brazil, has been found inside the abnormally small brain of an aborted fetus at roughly 29 weeks of gestation, a team of researchers reported in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

An autopsy of the aborted fetus revealed a brain that had virtually none of the folds and convolutions that would usually be seen on the brain's surface in a fetus at that point in its development. Calcium deposits were evident throughout the brain's white matter – the tissue that connects neurons and brain regions to one another. And in several places, those calcifications displaced developing cortical matter.

The calcium deposits “resembled destroyed neuronal structures,” the researchers said.

The new report takes a major step toward filling in the picture of the Zika virus and its effect on fetal development. The team also reported they recovered the “complete genome” of Zika virus from the fetal brain.

The recovery of Zika virus that would permit a full genomic analysis also sets the stage for many insights. Scientists sequencing the viral genome will be able to compare it to Zika virus collected in other outbreaks, and that circulating elsewhere, to see if it has changed or if varying strains of the virus exist.

Read full, original post: [Zika virus found in fetal brain](#)