

Vector Control Unit of Puerto Rico ^[1]

Submitted on 29 September 2016 - 11:12am

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The Puerto Rico Science, Technology and Research Trust (PRSTRT) announced the establishment of the Vector Control Unit of Puerto Rico after receiving official announcement of the Center for Diseases Control & Prevention (CDC) for a collaborative agreement for this purpose. Such collaborative agreement will give the Trust a grant to create, manage and operate this unit.

The Puerto Rico Vector Control Unit will carry out a comprehensive integrated vector management program for reducing the *aedes aegypti* mosquitoes including a monitoring & control process, surveillance systems and a communications strategy including community mobilization.

This initiative is aligned with the mission of the Trust to invest, facilitate and build capacities to continually advance Puerto Rico's economy and its citizens' well-being innovation-driven enterprises, science and technology and its industrial base.

Earlier this year, the 'Brain Trust for Tropical Diseases Research & Prevention', one of the PRSTRT programs, at its second meeting coordinated a technical workshop on vector control (mosquitoes and other insects). Forty-seven epidemiologists and experts in tropical diseases including experts from the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), discussed and proposed potential strategies and solutions for the reduction and eventual elimination of *aedes aegypti*.

They agreed that one of the major steps to achieve this goal was the creation of an autonomous entity responsible for the integrated management of vector control. This type of vector control unit currently exists in many cities and counties in the United States and other countries. Last June 2016, CDC Director Dr. Thomas Frieden and the Governor of Puerto Rico, Honorable Alejandro García Padilla, signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) which supported the creation of the unit vectors of Puerto Rico. The executive order issued by the Governor's office subsequently established the legal basis for the creation of it and designates the PRSTRT as the entity in charge of the development of this unit.

The *aedes aegypti* mosquito is responsible for dengue, chikungunya and zika. This Vector Control Unit will work collaboratively with community groups, municipalities, government agencies and different professional organizations to implement an integrated strategy that will include mobilization and community participation, development of technical infrastructure and information systems for monitoring and control mosquitoes that would facilitate their reduction.

Lucy Crespo, CEO of the Trust for Science, Technology and Research of Puerto Rico, also announced that the Vector Control Unit of Puerto Rico will soon begin recruiting professionals in the areas of Entomology, Biology, Chemistry, Computing and Communications, who will be an integral part in implementing this program so necessary for Puerto Rico at this time.

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