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Mozzie app tracks hot spots

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RESEARCHERS in Singapore have created a free mobile application that aims to predict where the next dengue hot spot will crop up.

Mo-Buzz uses historical data and mosquito migration patterns to alert users whenever they enter an area with high rates of the disease.

The application – the first of its kind – also allows the public to help reduce the spread of dengue by uploading photographs of possible mosquito breeding grounds.

These can then be brought to the attention of the authorities.

The new app comes amid one of the worst dengue fever outbreaks in Singapore's history, with more than 9,000 reported cases this year.

Researchers from Nanyang Technological University developed this at the Centre of Social Media Innovations for Communities (Cosmic).

They began the $150,000 project in 2010 by studying three countries: Singapore, India and Vietnam.

The app has since been endorsed by the World Health Organisation, which invited the team to test the system out next week in Sri Lanka, a country hit particularly hard by dengue.

Associate Professor May O Lwin, the project's principal investigator, said it could help to ease the strain on public hospitals.

For example, people bitten by mosquitoes can upload images of the bites through the app and receive a dengue checklist to help diagnose their symptoms, added the 47-year-old.

However, the system has yet to be implemented on a national scale. The university is holding preliminary discussions with the relevant authorities.

Cosmic director Schubert Foo, 54, said Mo-Buzz is ready for field testing in Singapore.

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