Members of the Congressional Committee on Science, Space & Technology hosted a presentation about the Zika virus Wednesday in Washington, D.C.

The event featured a scientific panel discussion with four members, including Dr. Steve Presley of Lubbock.

The panel discussion was streamed live online.

Panelists discussed topics ranging from the history of Zika to what to expect moving forward.

The panel included four scientists including Presley, professor in the department of environmental toxicology at Texas Tech; Dr. Kacey Ernst, associate professor in the department of epidemiology and biostatistics at the University of Arizona; Dr. Daniel Neafsey, associate director at the Genomic Center for Infectious Disease at the Barod Institute of MIT and Harvard; and Hadyn Parry, chief executive officer of Oxitec: Innovative Insect Control.

The official title of their discussion was "Science of Zika: The DNA of an Epidemic."

The congressional committee received a thorough overview of Zika. Each committee member had five minutes to ask questions of the four panelists. In his opening remarks, U.S. Rep. Lamar Smith, R-Texas, chairman of the committee, said more than 500 people in the United States have been diagnosed with Zika after traveling outside the country.

"The World Health Organization in February declared Zika a public health emergency of international concern," he said.

When a congressman raised a question about travel concerns, Presley said travel warnings should be expressed for more than just women. "I believe stricter travel restrictions or advisories should be implemented," Presley said.

Nonessential travel to countries affected by Zika should be minimal, he said.

The Centers for Disease Control website maintains an updated list of countries with cases of the virus.

Being proactive and taking precautionary measures at home could help reduce risks of experiencing mass outbreaks.

Mass fogging is one of the methods Lubbock Vector Control has implemented within the city to maintain mosquito activity. Presley mentioned that during the panel discussion.

While mass fogging helps, he said, it’s not enough.

"I believe in prevention from the standpoint of educating the public," Presley said. "These mosquitoes are called 'backyard mosquitoes' for a reason. They like to live around people and in the yard."

Homeowners need to put forth efforts to maintain their personal yard space by taking precautions such as draining standing water and spraying their yards.

There are multiple low-cost pesticides available at multiple gardening stores, he said.

Options are available for a variety of budgets.

"You can buy a home thermal fogger which creates a fog cloud that will penetrate vegetation," he said.

Relying on methods like mass fogging isn’t enough.

During his time, U.S. Rep. Randy Neugebauer, R-Lubbock, said the U.S. has been lucky so far. Reports from around the world show other countries battling a fast-spreading Zika virus but it’s been relatively tame in the U.S.

With the threat growing, the scientific community is scrambling to find answers and the government has spent money trying to control the crisis when time could have been spent planning ahead, he said.

"How can we get in front of some of these rather than being in a reactive mode?" he asked.

Ernst, one of the panelists, said a few strides have been made by setting up plans for preventative action, but too little is understood about the virus. It’s difficult to gauge where and when risks will rise.

Presley agreed and said funding more research should be the first step.

Panicking and throwing money during a crisis doesn’t fix it, he said.

Zika is happening now, he said. Chikungunya and Ebola raised concerns last year. There’s no absolute way to tell what will be next.