

Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV)

As of 7 June 2013, the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infection, formerly known as novel coronavirus (nCoV), has been laboratory confirmed in 55 patients, including 31 deaths (case fatality rate 56%). The MERS-CoV infection has been associated with severe respiratory illness, with most patients presenting with fever, cough, and breathing difficulties; atypical symptoms such as diarrhoea have also been reported, especially in patients who are immunocompromised.

To date, all cases identified have had either a direct or indirect connection with the Middle East. However, some cases identified in recent travellers from the Middle East have resulted in local, non-sustained transmission to close contacts.

The latest case reported was an 83-year-old man, who became ill on 27 May 2013 and died on 31 May 2013. He was from Al-Ahsa in Saudi Arabia, where an outbreak began in a healthcare facility in April 2013. For more information on cases see the World Health Organization (WHO) link below:

http://www.who.int/csr/don/archive/disease/coronavirus_infections/en/index.html.

Healthcare providers are advised to be vigilant for recent travellers returning from areas affected by the virus who develop severe acute respiratory illness (SARI) or pneumonia. Lower respiratory tract specimens should be obtained for diagnosis where possible. Clinicians are reminded that MERS-CoV infection should be considered even with

atypical signs and symptoms in patients who are significantly immunocompromised. Healthcare facilities that provide care for patients with suspected or confirmed MERS-CoV infection should take appropriate measures to decrease the risk of transmission of the virus to other patients, healthcare workers and visitors.

For guidance on case definitions and testing for MERS-CoV, clinicians can access information at: <http://nicd.ac.za/assets/files/Guidelines%20for%20case%20finding%20and%20laboratory%20testing%20for%20novel%20coronavirus%2027%20Nov2012.pdf>.

For guidance on infection prevention and control in specimen collection as well as patient management, see the WHO link below.

http://www.who.int/csr/disease/coronavirus_infections/IPCnCoVguidance_06May13.pdf

Additional information

WHO website: http://www.who.int/csr/disease/coronavirus_infections/en/index.html

NICD webpage: <http://www.nicd.ac.za/>