

b Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever

A sixth case of Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever (CCHF) was confirmed in South Africa for 2014. The patient, a 70-year-old farmer from Senekal, Free State Province, was reportedly bitten on the leg by a "red" tick whilst handling cattle in the third week of November 2014. He fell ill three days after the tick bite. Clinical presentation (at a local private practice) included general malaise, anorexia, fatigue, arthralgia and fever. The patient was treated with antibiotics to cover for a presumptive diagnosis of tick bite fever, with no clinical improvement. His clinical condition deteriorated; he developed diarrhoea and haematemesis and was transferred to a Bloemfontein hospital on the 24th of November. On admission, the patient was isolated as CCHF was suspected on the basis of a history of tick bite. Clinical condition further deteriorated; complications included metabolic acidosis and multi-organ failure necessitating treatment in ICU. Laboratory results of the blood drawn on three consecutive days since admission showed markedly raised transaminases (ALT 5058 IU/L, AST 10493 IU/L), profound thrombocytopenia (platelet count $13 \times 10^9/L$) and raised WCC of $14 \times 10^9/L$. The diagnosis of CCHF was confirmed at NICD on the 25th of November 2014 by positive PCR test. The

patient died on the 26th November 2014 despite attempts to treat him with the antiviral, ribavirin, when the CCHF diagnosis was made.

Of the six confirmed cases of CCHF reported in South Africa for 2014 to date, 50% of the cases had a fatal outcome. On average the mortality rate for CCHF is reported as 30%. There are currently no clear correlates for survival although the development of anti-CCHF specific antibody at day 5 to 6 after onset of illness is a good prognostic indicator. The use of ribivirin is recommended early during illness but contra-indicated at advanced stages of the disease. The usefulness of ribivirin treatment for CCHF is however still contested by some. Extensive information and tools on Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever and the entire group of viral haemorrhagic fever viruses endemic to Africa, is available for health professionals and general public on www.nicd.ac.za.

Source: Centre for Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases, NICD-NHLS