

Novel coronavirus

As of 21 May 2013, there have been 44 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with novel coronavirus (nCoV) worldwide, including 22 deaths. All cases had respiratory disease as part of the illness, with most having severe respiratory illness requiring hospitalisation. The probable places of infection were Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates; there have been cases in the United Kingdom and France who had not travelled but were in contact with travellers recently returned from the Middle East.

A single case of nCoV has been reported in Africa to date. A 66-year-old Tunisian patient with confirmed nCoV infection died after returning from travel to Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Tests showed that two of his children were also infected and they are under medical observation.

Since 6 April 2013, a total of 21 patients (including nine deaths) has been reported to the World Health Organization from an outbreak primarily linked to a healthcare facility in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia.

The latest cases reported include confirmation of transmission to healthcare workers who were exposed to patients with confirmed nCoV. For more information on cases, see the WHO link below:

http://www.who.int/csr/don/2013_05_15_ncov/en/index.html

Healthcare workers are advised to be vigilant regarding recent travellers returning from areas affected by the virus who develop severe acute respiratory illness. Specimens from patients' lower respiratory tracts should be obtained for diagnosis where possible. Clinicians are reminded that nCoV infection should be considered even with atypical signs and symptoms in patients who are significantly immunocompromised.

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

Additional information

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

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

Source: Centre for Respiratory Diseases and Meningitis, NICD-NHLS