

Five new SARS-like virus case in Saudi Arabia

28 May 2013

The Saudi health ministry said on Tuesday it has recorded five new cases of a deadly SARS-like virus in the east of the oil-rich kingdom.

It identified those affected as elderly people aged between 73 and 85 who had been grappling with [chronic illnesses](#).

The announcement came as France's first victim of the nCoV-EMC novel coronavirus—a cousin of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome ([SARS](#)) that sparked a world health scare in 2003—died on Tuesday.

The 65-year-old man is thought to have contracted the [virus](#) in Dubai, and a man who shared a hospital room with him in France is also affected.

Saudi Arabia counts by far the most cases of the new virus, with more than 30 confirmed infections and 18 fatalities. Cases have also been detected in Jordan, Qatar, Tunisia, the [United Arab Emirates](#), Germany, and Britain.

The virus, which has killed 24 people so far, was last week redubbed the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus, or MERS.

SARS erupted in east Asia 10 years ago, leaping to humans from animal hosts and eventually killing some 800 people.

Like SARS, the new virus appears to cause an infection deep in the lungs, with patients suffering from a temperature, cough and [breathing difficulty](#), but it differs from SARS in that it also causes rapid kidney failure.

A timeline of SARS-like virus

The new coronavirus, which first emerged in June 2012 and has been named by the [World Health Organisation](#) the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS CoV), has infected

in less than a year 44 people around the world, of whom 24 have died.

The virus is a cousin of [Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome](#) (SARS), which triggered a scare 10 years ago when it erupted in east Asia, leaping to humans from animal hosts and eventually killing some 800 people.

A timeline:

- June 2012: The [new virus](#) emerges in Saudi Arabia, where a patient suffering from [respiratory problems](#) dies. In September the virus is identified as the new coronavirus nCoV.

- September: The WHO says that a Qatari man is critically ill in a London hospital after contracting an infection similar to SARS. It says the man, who fell ill after a visit to Saudi Arabia, is suffering from acute respiratory infection and [kidney failure](#).

Riyadh says there has been another fatal case of the virus.

- November: Four new cases, one of which is fatal, are reported to the WHO, of which three are in Saudi Arabia and one in Qatar.

Scientists in the Netherlands say the virus is closely related to a virus found in Asian bats.

- February, 2013: A person suffering from the virus dies in Britain. The victim appears to have caught the virus from a family member who visited the Middle East and Pakistan.

Two patients die in Jordan.

- March: A 70-year-old Saudi citizen who has been transferred to Germany for treatment dies in Munich of the virus.

The WHO reiterates calls on its member states to

remain vigilant for cases of severe acute respiratory infections and to carefully review any unusual patterns.

- May 7: The first case of the virus is registered in France in a 65-year-old man who has returned from Dubai.

On the 12, the transmission from person to person is confirmed with the infection of the person he is sharing a room with.

- May 10: A man travelling from Saudi Arabia who was infected with the coronavirus dies in Tunisia.

- May 15: The WHO says two Saudi health workers contract the deadly coronavirus from patients.

- May 23: The WHO voices deep concern over the virus, saying it might potentially spread more widely between humans. It redubs it the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus.

- May 26: An 81-year-old woman who had contracted the [coronavirus](#) dies in [Saudi Arabia](#), raising the death toll in the kingdom to 18, mostly in the east.

- May 28: France's first casualty of the virus dies.

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