

# Is MERS another SARS: The facts behind Middle East Respiratory Syndrome

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MERS coronavirus particles (green) on camel epithelial cells. Credit: NIAID in collaboration with Colorado State University.

Experts show that while Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV), a viral respiratory illness, is infecting less people, it has a higher mortality rate and affects a specific target population when compared to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV). This research is being presented at the International Conference on Emerging and Infectious Diseases in Atlanta, Georgia.

"The research conducted in this study focuses on understanding what population of individuals are most likely to become infected by MERS-CoV, compared to the [population](#) infected by SARS-CoV," said Charis Royal from Arizona State University. Understanding the [population dynamics](#) of the infected cases in both diseases can lead to understanding how the new disease will spread and if it can be compared to the SARS-CoV.

"An unusually high number of MERS-CoV cases are males with a [median age](#) of 50 years old, who have multiple chronic conditions," said Royal. "SARS-CoV, on the other hand, infects males and females nearly equally and both healthy and unhealthy individuals can be infected" she added. Both diseases spread rapidly in hospitals and hospital workers account for around 21% of infections in both SARS-CoV and MERS-CoV.

In 2003, multi-country outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV) left over 8000 people infected and had a death toll of over 700. In 2012, the novel coronavirus, MERS-CoV, which is related to SARS-CoV3, was first reported in Saudi Arabia. Over the last three years, MERS-CoV has spread to 14 different countries and infected more than 1300 individuals.

Data from the research was gathered through the World Health Organization summary reports for MERS-CoV and the cumulative data reports for the 2003 SARS-CoV outbreak.

**More information:** This research was presented as part of the 2015 International Conference on Emerging and Infectious Diseases held August 24 - 26 in Atlanta, Georgia.

Provided by American Society for Microbiology

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