

Global Overview Of an Emerging Novel Coronavirus (MERS-CoV)

**World Health Assembly
23 May 2013**



**World Health
Organization**

Introduction

- World experiencing evolving emergence of two exceptional new virus infections
 - Avian influenza A(H7N9)
 - Novel coronavirus
 - Termed Middle east Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS CoV)
- Unusual global situation
 - Unrelated viruses
 - Both highly pathogenic
 - Both considered to have potential to evolve & spread

Epidemiology

- First known cases spring 2012
- 44 lab-confirmed cases (22 deaths)
- Most male (79%); age 24 to 94 years (median 56)
- Settings where infection has occurred
 - Communities: sporadic cases with unknown exposure
 - Families: contact with infected family members
 - Health care facilities: patients & health care workers



Epidemiology

- Countries where cases acquired infection in-country from an unknown source
 - Jordan, KSA, Qatar, UAE
- Countries where cases are associated with travel or contact with a returned infected traveler
 - Germany, France, Tunisia, UK



Epidemiology

- Several clusters
- In large clusters
 - Connection between cases not fully understood & under investigation
- Evidence for limited person-to-person transmission in some clusters



Illness & Treatment

- All have respiratory disease
 - From mild symptoms to severe pneumonia
 - Atypical symptoms can be predominant if immunocompromised
- General care can be life saving
- No approved virus-specific therapy at this time



WHO assessment and concerns

- Evolving, urgent & complex situation
- Several critical gaps in understanding
 - Geographic spread?
 - Most important exposures leading to infection?
 - Degree of transmissibility between people?
 - Possibility of "super spreaders"?



WHO assessment and concerns

- High concern over potential for sustainable person-to-person transmission & spread
- Countries & global community not adequately prepared
 - Awareness
 - Surveillance
 - Readiness for potential impact on health, health systems, communities & economies
 - Most effective prevention, treatment & public health control measures

WHO strategic goals for MERS CoV (& H7N9)

- Protect people and communities
- Assess and monitor the situation
- Ensure preparedness by all countries
- Provide global leadership and coordination



Central Role of International Health Regulations

- Legally binding framework for global health security
- To strengthen detection, assessment, information & response to all potential public health events of international concern
- To minimize public health / economic impact of events
- Implementation dependent upon
 - National awareness, readiness & use of IHR
 - Strong national core capacities
 - Strong global systems for alert, assessment & response

IHR Member State reporting requirements to WHO

● Notification

- All events which may constitute a public health emergency of international concern
- Within 24 hours of assessment of public health information

● Continued reporting

- Timely, accurate & sufficiently detailed public health information
- To support development of risk assessment, case definition & guidance for treatment & case management

Take home messages

- Situation evolving & future course unknown
- Guidance
 - Intensify surveillance
 - Increase awareness
 - Especially medical workers, travelers
 - Review, improve & accelerate readiness / preparedness
- WHO actively planning joint missions with KSA & Tunisia
 - Similar to joint mission with China on H7N9



Thank you