

## Current Event

### Contact Tracing and MERS

Contact tracing teams of Ministry of Health (MoH) identified 99 MERS cases in 2016.

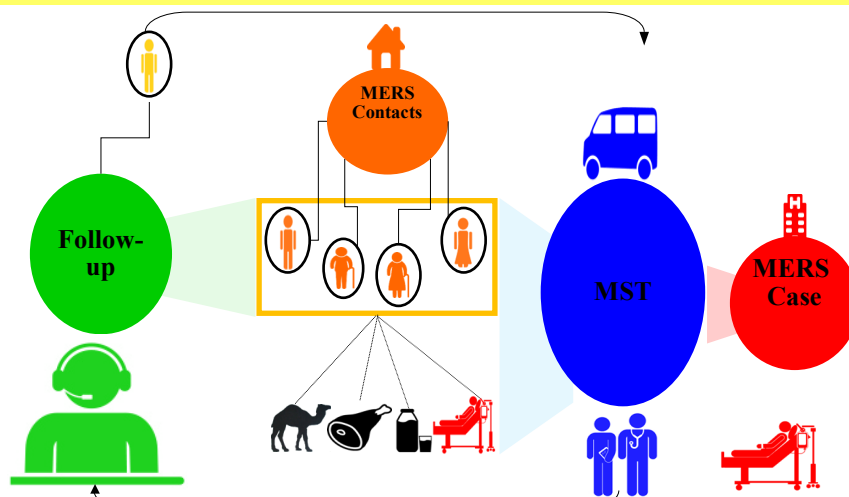
## Editorial Notes

Communicable diseases impose a great threat to public health. This risk increases in case of emerging infectious diseases where no therapeutic, prophylaxis or vaccines are available or clinically approved, yet. Identify contacts especially at the early stage of the disease when MERS may not be suspected is critical to avoid further spread of the disease.

Contact tracers are about 60 teams around the Kingdom. Each team consists of two to four members. From Jan 1 to May 8, 2016, an average of 595 contacts required daily monitoring. During this interval, 15 contacts who displayed signs or symptoms of MERS were identified and investigated; among these 15 contacts, 8 (53.3%) had confirmed MERS.

Once a case gets confirmed with MERS it signals the initiation of contact tracing process (Figure 1). Mobile Surveillance Team (MST) within 24 hours proceeds with the field visit. Environmental assessment of the surroundings to find out any probable source of infection is part of the responsibility of this team, as well as, history taking and listing contacts. MST makes sure that the contacts are fully aware of the probable symptoms of MERS, the process of daily follow up, and the importance of informing the team in case if they have any of these symptoms. Further instructions are being given to the contacts about the preventive behaviors against MERS, provided with educational materials and basic personal protective equipment. A subsequent community

Figure 1: Contact Tracing Process for MERS



### Cases of MERS-CoV: International Week (IW) No. 18: 1 – 7 May 2016

Total	3
Symptomatic (S)	2
Asymptomatic (AS)	1
Healthcare worker (S)	0
Healthcare Worker (AS)	0

report of the field visit is conducted to the directorate of communicable diseases. Immediately afterwards, a daily status reports are issued upon the monitoring of the contacts for 14 days. The whole process will start over again once a suspected case is detected. Contact tracing goes a step further in Hajj season. Through collaboration with the national information center (responsible for issuing Hajj permits), all contacts within the incubation period will not be given the Hajj permits.

Contact tracers have been encountered by several challenges, for instance, patients may not be able to accurately recall all their contacts. In few incidents, denial or refusal to disclose any contact with camels to protect their business or for any other reason despite all the attempts of reassurance.

Strengthening MERS contact tracing is an ongoing process which requires effective communication, training and quality control.

## Recent Publications:

Min CK, Cheon S, Ha NY, Sohn KM, Kim Y, Aigerim A, Shin HM, Choi JY, Inn KS, Kim JH, Moon JY, Choi MS, Cho NH, Kim YS. Comparative and kinetic analysis of viral shedding and immunological responses in MERS patients representing a broad spectrum of disease severity. *Sci Rep.* 2016 May 5;6:25359. doi: 10.1038/srep25359.

## MERS-CoV in KSA 2016\*

Region	Case	Primary	Secondary	U.C.
Qassim	36	10	23	3
Riyadh (2)	30	19	9	2
Hail	6	5	0	1
Jeddah	5	4	0	1
Asir	5	4	1	0
Taif	4	3	1	0
Najran	4	3	0	1
Al-Ahsaa (1)	3	3	0	0
Madinah	2	2	0	0
Eastern Region	2	2	0	0
Al-Baha	1	0	0	1
Bisha	1	1	0	0
Makkah	0	0	0	0
Tabuk	0	0	0	0
Al-Joaf	0	0	0	0
Jazan	0	0	0	0
Northern Borders	0	0	0	0
Qunfotha	0	0	0	0
Hafr Al-Batin	0	0	0	0
Qurayyat	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>9</b>

Case: Confirmed Symptomatic. U.C.: Unclassified cases  
\*Period: Form 3 Jan to 7 May 2016  
Regions with new cases of this week are highlighted in yellow.