

Current Event

Delays in Shipment

Some delays in shipping specimens of suspected MERS cases have been detected.

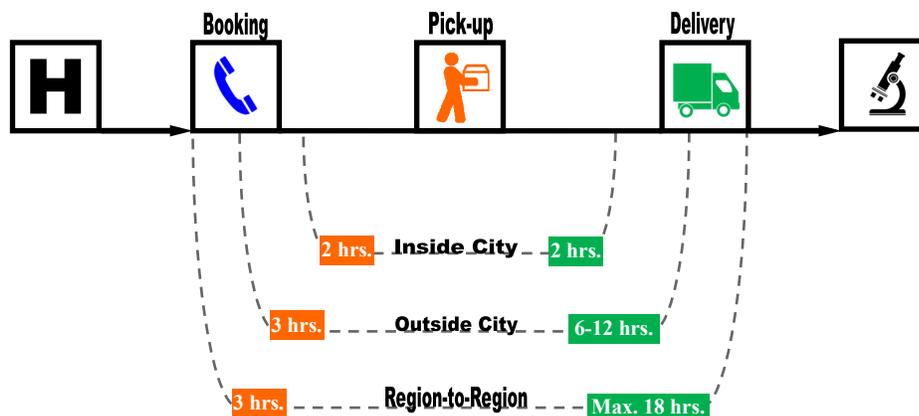
Editorial Notes

Isolation of suspected MERS cases should not be delayed pending confirmatory laboratory results, as timely reporting of laboratory results is very important both from a medical and financial point of view. Any delay in confirming diagnosis could lead to further increase in the number of cases and related deaths, along with an increased expenditure in medical care. Therefore, timeliness is a critical issue to protect the community and preserve resources.

Delays in 121 (17.5%) out of 691 delivered shipments of specimens of suspected MERS cases across the Kingdom have been detected from the 4th to the 10th of April, 2016. The delays were more in Al-Ahsaa region (29%), Hail (24%), Makkah (22%), and Riyadh (20%). Some delays of shipments are expected due to circumstances beyond control (i.e. weather conditions, traffic or during seasons like Hajj). Security issues in some of the non-MoH governmental hospitals causes some delays, too. Negligence from staff of the carrier's company is also one of the causes of delays.

The incident management system of Ministry of Health ensures timely laboratory tests by setting the criteria for managing incidents like delays in shipment. The chain of delivering specimens consists of three phases; booking, picking-up and delivery. Each phase has a maximum permissible time based on the geographical distribution of hospitals to regional laboratories (Figure 1). The shipment process is monitored by the National Situation Room (NSR). Delays in less than 5% of the total shipments is ac-

Figure 1: The Chain of Delivering Specimens



Cases of MERS-CoV: International Week (IW) No. 15: 10 – 16 Apr 2016

Total	5
Symptomatic (S)	5
Asymptomatic (AS)	0
Healthcare worker (S)	0
Healthcare Worker (AS)	0

ceptable. Once a delay ($\geq 5\%$) in a region is detected, the NSR raises the alert to the national laboratory platform to contact the carrier in order to provide a report explaining causes of the delay.

Once an incident of a delay in shipment is detected, it is categorized into either in the pick-up stage or the delivery; and whether it is inside, outside the city or from region to region, for the escalation to follow accordingly. Usually, if the delay was in the pick-up stage the cause is from the healthcare facility. The carrier is supposed to reject specimens of suspected MERS cases if they don't have a health electronic surveillance network number. The booking should be done before taking the sample, even though the NSR's dashboards have been adjusted to monitor the time from the pick-up of the sample instead of the booking time. Collaborative efforts are important to facilitate shipments of infectious specimens to avoid delays.

Recent Publications:

Wang C, Zheng X, Gai W, Zhao Y, Wang H, Wang H, Feng N, Chi H, Qiu B, Li N, Wang T, Gao Y, Yang S, Xia X. MERS-CoV virus-like particles produced in insect cells induce specific humoral and cellular immunity in rhesus macaques. *Oncotarget*. 2016 Mar 30. doi: 10.18632/oncotarget.8475.

MERS-CoV in KSA 2016*

Region	Case	Primary	Secondary	U.C.
Qassim	36	10	23	3
Riyadh (2)	27	18	7	2
Jeddah	5	4	0	1
Hail	5	5	0	0
Taif	4	3	1	0
Asir	4	4	0	0
Najran (1)	4	3	0	1
Madinah (1)	2	2	0	0
Eastern Region	2	2	0	0
Bisha	1	1	0	0
Al-Baha	1	0	0	1
Al-Ahsaa (1)	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
Total	92	53	31	8

Case: Confirmed Symptomatic. U.C.: Unclassified cases

*Period: Form 3 Jan to 16 Apr 2016

Regions with new cases of this week are highlighted in yellow.