

Current Event

Media and MERS

Earlier this month, Command and Control Center held a press conference about MERS.

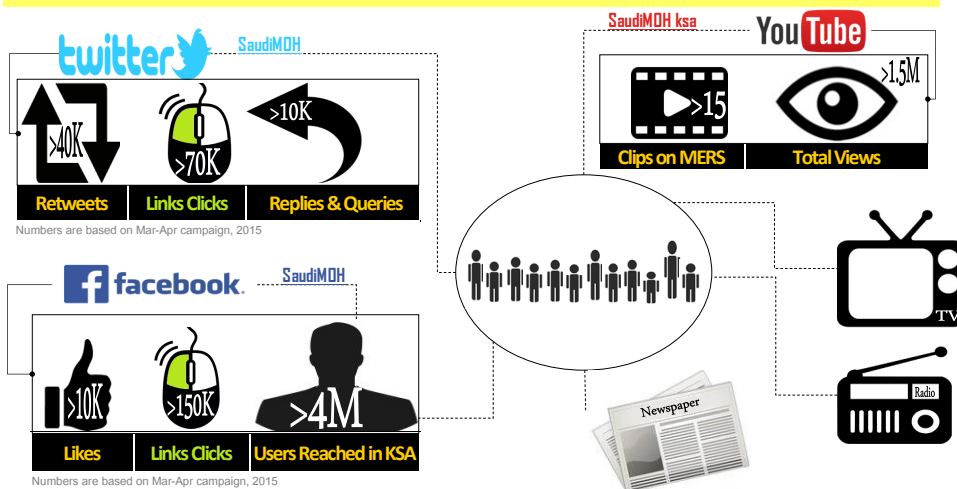
Editorial Notes

Media outreach and use has a great role in controlling the transmission of infectious diseases, including MERS. The influence of media on the general public's perceptions and eventually their reactions is significant. In the event of an outbreak, any single contradicting or inaccurate message through any media channel could contribute to public confusion or trigger panic.

All channels of media, especially social media are considered primary sources of information for many. Therefore, it is important to carefully handle any single message intended to be published through media. All health messages have to be consistent, clear, and direct. Ministry of Health (MoH) is facilitating a two-way communication with the local media to overcome challenges of delivering timely, accurate and consistent information about MERS. Consistency in delivering health messages is critical to ensure public trust.

Media department of MoH is also reaching public through both of traditional and new media channels. In 2015, two digital awareness campaigns about MERS had reached the general public through famous social media channels under the theme "#We_Can_Stop_It". Educational messages have been promoted to the major and most visited accounts and top searches in Saudi Arabia. So far, awareness activities continued in famous social media channels, like Twitter (4 tweets on MERS/daily), Facebook (4 posts on MERS/daily), Snapchat (through popular snapchat-

Figure 1: MoH Media Approaches for MERS



Cases of MERS-CoV: International Week (IW) No. 12: 20 – 26 Mar 2016

Total	6
Symptomatic (S)	6
Asymptomatic (AS)	0
Healthcare worker (S)	0
Healthcare Worker (AS)	0

ters) and YouTube throughout the year. This is all along with Television, Radio, and Newspapers (Figure 1).

Creating more channels with the local media is needed to ensure accurate and consistent reporting of health information related to MERS or any other emerging infectious diseases. Improving health reporting on emerging infectious diseases is equally important to avoid conflicting messages and to improve clarity and simplicity of presenting health information.

The impact of media on MERS control could be employed as a model to handle any other emerging infectious diseases in the future. The new media channels made any information including rumors go viral. Reactive role to this huge flow of information is not enough. Therefore, being proactive as much as possible gives a substantial control of health messages and builds credibility.

Recent Publications:

Thorner AR, Cao B, Jiang T, Warner AJ, Bonis PA. Correlation Between UpToDate Searches and Reported Cases of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome During Outbreaks in Saudi Arabia. Open Forum Infect Dis. 2016 Feb 18;3(1):ofw043. doi: 10.1093/ofid/ofw043. eCollection 2016 Jan.

MERS-CoV in KSA 2016*

Region	Case	Primary	Secondary	U.C.
Qassim (6)	33	9	21	3
Riyadh	24	17	6	1
Jeddah	5	4	0	1
Hail	4	4	0	0
Taif	3	2	1	0
Asir	2	2	0	0
Najran	2	2	0	0
Madinah	1	1	0	0
Bisha	1	1	0	0
Eastern Region	1	1	0	0
Al-Baha	1	0	0	1
Makkah	0	0	0	0
Tabuk	0	0	0	0
Al-Ahsaa	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	77	43	28	6

Case: Confirmed Symptomatic. U.C.: Unclassified cases
 *Period: Form 3 Jan to 26 Mar 2016
 Regions with new cases of this week are highlighted in yellow.

