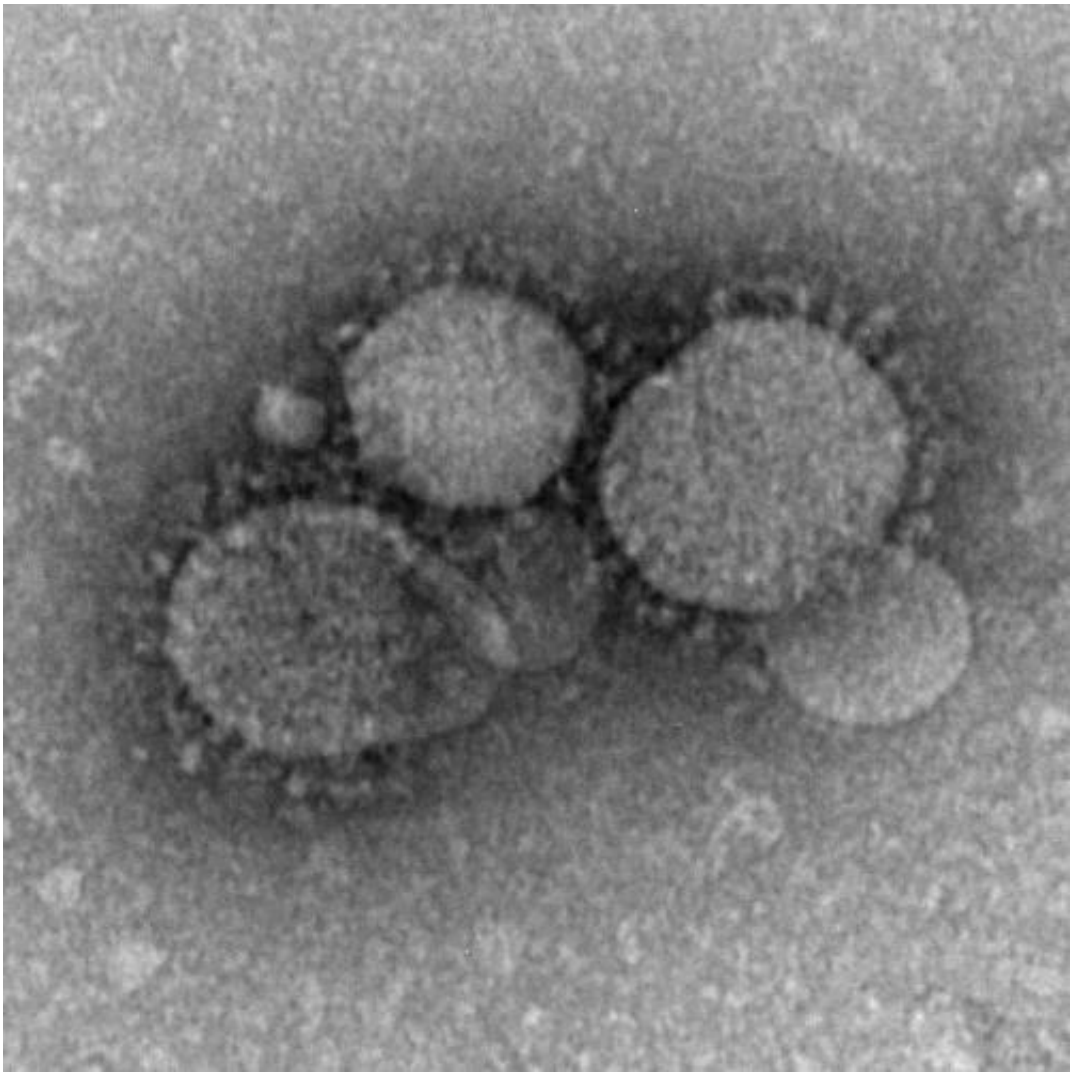
US reports second case of MERS virus (Update)

May 12 2014



MERS-CoV particles as seen by negative stain electron microscopy. Virions contain characteristic club-like projections emanating from the viral membrane. Credit: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

A second case of the dangerous Middle East respiratory virus, called MERS, has been found in the United States, health authorities said Monday.

The patient is a healthcare worker who resides and works in Saudi Arabia, who traveled by plane May 1 from Jeddah to London, England, then to Boston, Atlanta, and Orlando.

The patient, whose name and gender were not released, is in a Florida hospital and is "doing well," officials from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention told reporters.

The patient was in Florida to visit family and was admitted to a hospital on May 8.

Out of "an abundance of caution," the CDC said it is attempting to contact over 500 passengers on the traveler's flights to see if anyone is ill, but it is unclear whether the patient was contagious during the journey.

The United States announced its first case last week, in a healthcare worker who had traveled to Riyadh at the end of April.

He was released from the hospital on Saturday and is considered "fully recovered," the Indiana Health Department said.

Middle East Respiratory Virus, or MERS, causes fever, cough and shortness of breath, and can be lethal particularly among older people and those with pre-existing health problems.

Some 30 percent of the several hundred people infected with it have died, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The virus first emerged in Saudi Arabia in 2012 and recent research has suggested it may originate in camels.

According to the World Health Organization's latest count on May 9, MERS has killed 145 people out of 536 lab-confirmed infections.

The vast majority of cases have been in Saudi Arabia, but MERS has also been found in 16 other countries. Most cases involved people who had recently traveled to Saudi Arabia.

The World Health Organization is planning to hold an emergency meeting Tuesday to discuss the MERS crisis.

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