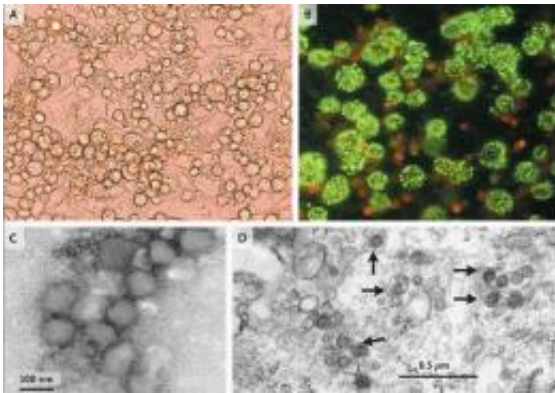


Ticks linked to deadly virus discovered in China

March 21 2011, by Deborah Braconnier



Morphologic Features of SFTS Bunyavirus. Image credit: [i]New England Journal of Medicine[/i], doi:10.1056/NEJMoa1010095

(PhysOrg.com) -- Doctors have been aware for years that ticks can spread the bacteria responsible for Lyme disease, but scientists in China have discovered a new deadly virus that is also carried by ticks and has been responsible for at least 36 deaths in China. In a recent study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, the scientists at the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention introduced the virus responsible for these deaths.

The new [virus](#), SFTSV, stands for severe fever with thrombocytopenia syndrome bunyavirus and can cause those infected to experience fever and multiple [organ failure](#). Severe symptoms include thrombocytopenia

(low blood platelet count), gastrointestinal issues, and leukocytopenia (low blood white count, which creates an increased risk in infection). With the original cases coming in, scientists observed a high fatality rate of 30 percent.

The virus was isolated in 171 patients throughout six different rural provinces in China and it had led to 36 deaths by September of 2010, creating a total fatality rate of 12 percent.

Scientists analyzed the new SFTSV and determined it was related to five Bunyaviridae viruses: orthobunyavirus, hantavirus, nairovirus, phlebovirus, and tospovirus. The report in the [New England Journal of Medicine](#) cited that they believe it belongs to the Phlebovirus genus as well as being related to the other four.

The majority of the patients with the virus were older than 50, with over half of them being women. Almost all of those who acquired the virus were farmers who lived in rural wooded areas and spent their time in agricultural fields and wooded areas.

Scientists found both mosquitoes and ticks in the area and homes of most of the patients. Scientists tested 5,900 mosquitos from the homes and found no presence of [viral RNA](#). These scientists also tested the *Haemaphysalis longicomis* species of ticks from the domesticated animals in the area and were able to isolate the RNA in 5.4 percent of the ticks. The viral RNA from the [ticks](#) was not identical to those from the patients but was closely related.

To date, there has been no epidemiological evidence that the SFTSV virus can be transmitted through human-to-human contact so the risk of a global outbreak is remote.

More information: Fever with Thrombocytopenia Associated with a

Novel Bunyavirus in China, *New England Journal of Medicine*, March 16, 2011. [doi:10.1056/NEJMoa1010095](https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMoa1010095)

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