

Qatari with SARS-like virus on artificial lung: UK hospital

September 25 2012

A Qatari man suffering from a mystery respiratory virus from the same family as the deadly disease SARS is on an artificial lung to keep him alive, a British hospital said Tuesday.

The 49-year-old was admitted to an [intensive care unit](#) in Doha on September 7 suffering from acute respiratory infection and kidney failure before being transferred to London by air ambulance on September 11.

He is now in a critical condition at Guy's and St Thomas' hospital in London.

"The patient, who has been isolated, is receiving extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (Ecmo) treatment, which delivers oxygen to the blood outside the body when the lungs are not able to," the hospital said in a statement.

The hospital said it was following strict procedures to ensure patients and staff are not infected by the mystery virus

"There is no evidence that the virus has been transmitted to any other patient or member of staff. However, staff involved in caring for this patient are being followed up by occupational health as a precaution," it said.

A Saudi Arabian national died earlier this year from a virtually identical

virus, the [World Health Organisation](#) has said.

The WHO confirmed in a global alert on Monday that the [new virus](#) was in the coronavirus family which causes the common cold but can also include more severe illnesses including SARS, or [Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome](#).

SARS swept out of China in 2003, killing more than 800 people worldwide.

Britain's [Health Protection Agency](#) also said the virus was from the same family as SARS but said it was different to any previously identified in humans, adding that it caused "acute respiratory illness".

WHO spokesman Gregory Haertl stressed that the new virus was not SARS itself, pointing out that what sets the new virus apart was that it caused rapid [kidney failure](#).

He said though that very little was known about the new virus so far, pointing out that there were only two confirmed cases, which popped up three months apart and with no connection besides the fact that both men had links to Saudi Arabia.

"We don't know yet how it transmits... if it's human to human or animal to human," he said, pointing out that the virus might also provoke milder, and therefore undetected illness.

"We are very much in an investigative period," he said.

Saudi health authorities on Tuesday also downplayed the impact of a possible outbreak of the virus, saying that cases in the kingdom remain rare.

"There have been two cases of flu over a period of time. This is normal," said health ministry spokesman Khaled al-Mirghalani.

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