

# Viewpoint: Patient identified with illness similar to SARS

September 27 2012

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A new respiratory illness, similar to SARS, has been identified in a man who is being treated in the UK.

The condition is caused by a [coronavirus](#), a large family of viruses that includes some causes of the common cold and SARS. The [new virus](#), which has similar genetic properties to SARS, causes respiratory infection, and is the first of its kind to be identified in the UK.

Dr Jonathan Read, from the National Centre for Zoonosis Research at the University of Liverpool, said: "Until further investigation is carried out, it is too early to say whether those people who have been confirmed to have this virus caught it from an animal or another person. It is very difficult to determine how a new infection transmits between people until a sizable number of cases are identified and investigated, and the information is considered together.

"It may be that this virus is not very new. Since the emergence of SARS in 2002/03, several more novel coronaviruses have been found in humans, but none have gone on to cause outbreaks. A lot of the cases of SARS were actually [healthcare workers](#) caring for patients, and this is why the [Health Protection Agency](#) has issued guidelines for the monitoring of the contacts and carers of the patients in the UK.

"SARS was controllable because the symptoms were recognised early in those patients infected with the disease, before they could infect too many people. If the new virus can spread between people, and if it is

similar to SARS in the way that symptoms are apparent, then even though there is no vaccine we stand every chance of controlling an outbreak."

Provided by University of Liverpool

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