

Oman detects first MERS infection

October 30 2013

Oman has discovered the first case of the MERS coronavirus in the Gulf sultanate, Health Minister Ahmed al-Saeedi said on Wednesday.

The patient, a 68-year-old Omani man, was receiving treatment at a hospital in Nazwa, 150 kilometres (93 miles) west of Muscat, and was "stable," Saeedi told AFP.

He said the case, the first in Oman, had been discovered on Tuesday, and that the patient had diabetes.

Oman News Agency said the patient was "suffering from a [chest infection](#)".

The Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV) has so far claimed 62 lives worldwide, with most of the deaths occurring in Saudi Arabia, where the disease first appeared in September 2012, according to the World Health Organisation.

The WHO said last week there was a total of 144 confirmed cases of the respiratory disease worldwide.

Experts are struggling to understand MERS, for which there is no vaccine.

It is considered a deadlier but less transmissible cousin of the SARS virus that erupted in Asia in 2003 and infected 8,273 people, nine percent of whom died.

Like SARS, MERS appears to cause a lung infection, with patients suffering from a temperature, cough and breathing difficulty.

But it differs in that it also causes rapid kidney failure and the extremely high death rate has caused serious concern.

In August, researchers pointed to the Arabian camel as a possible host of the virus.

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