

Egypt reports first case of MERS virus

April 26 2014



In this Wednesday, April 16, 2014, file photo, passengers walk past the medical quarantine area showing information sheets for the Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus at the arrival section of Manila's International Airport in Paranaque, south of Manila. One expert says recent outbreaks of MERS in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates that led to more than 20 infections, many among health-care workers, "have put us into uncharted territory." Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah sacked the country's health minister on Monday, April 21, 2014, amid a spike in deaths and infections from the virus known as the Middle East respiratory syndrome, or MERS. The official Saudi Press Agency carried the royal order that said Abdullah al-Rabiah was relieved of his post as Health Minister, and that Labor Minister Adel Faqih will temporarily take over the health minister's portfolio until a replacement is named. The statement said al-Rabiah is now adviser to the Royal Court. (AP Photo/Aaron Favila, File)

Egyptian authorities have detected the first case of a dangerous SARS-like virus in the country, the state news agency said Saturday.

MENA said a 27-year-old civil engineer was diagnosed Saturday morning after returning from Saudi Arabia, where the Middle East respiratory syndrome, or MERS, has been centered. It said the man was quarantined upon his arrival at Cairo airport Friday and transported to a nearby hospital.

MERS belongs to a family of viruses known as coronaviruses that include both the common cold and SARS, or severe acute respiratory syndrome, which killed some 800 people in a global outbreak in 2003. MERS can cause symptoms such as fever, breathing problems, pneumonia and kidney failure.

There is no vaccine or treatment for the MERS virus, and it is still unclear how it is transmitted. It also has been detected in Asia and Europe.

Saudi Arabia's Health Ministry said late Friday that five more people in the kingdom have died from MERS.

The ministry says 92 people have died and 313 have contracted the virus in Saudi since September 2012.

King Abdullah fired his health minister Monday as officials struggle to alleviate public concerns amid a spike in infections.



In this Thursday, Oct. 17, 2013, file photo, Egyptian Muslim pilgrims, some wearing masks as a precaution against the Middle East respiratory syndrome, pray after they cast stones at a pillar, symbolizing the stoning of Satan, in a ritual called "Jamarat," the last rite of the annual hajj, in Mina near the Muslim holy city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah sacked the country's health minister on Monday, April 21, 2014, amid a spike in deaths and infections from the virus known as the Middle East respiratory syndrome, or MERS. The official Saudi Press Agency carried the royal order that said Abdullah al-Rabiah was relieved of his post as Health Minister, and that Labor Minister Adel Faqih will temporarily take over the health minister's portfolio until a replacement is named. The statement said al-Rabiah is now adviser to the Royal Court. (AP Photo/Amr Nabil, File)

On Saturday, the new health minister, Adel Faqih, announced that the country was reserving three medical centers in several cities for treating MERS cases exclusively, as part of a nation-wide plan for containing the disease's spread.

In a statement on the ministry's website, Faqih said the centers would be equipped with the latest medical technologies for diagnosing and treating the virus. He also said he plans to invite experts from Germany, Britain, France and the United States to study the outbreak.

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Citation: Egypt reports first case of MERS virus (2014, April 26) retrieved 9 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-04-egypt-case-mers-virus.html>

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