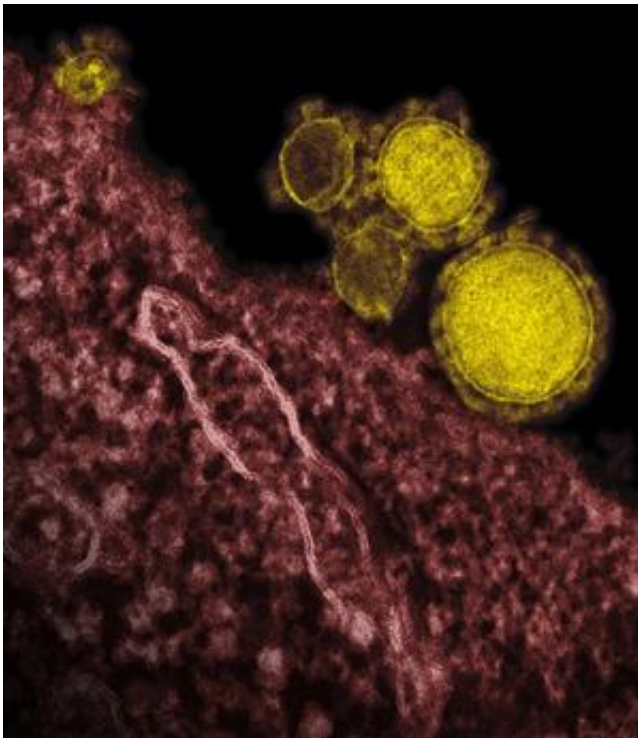


# Saudi Arabia reports five new deaths from MERS (Update)

May 13 2014

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This undated file electron microscope image made available by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases - Rocky Mountain Laboratories shows novel coronavirus particles, also known as the MERS virus, colorized in yellow. Four more people have died in Saudi Arabia after contracting an often fatal Middle East respiratory virus as the number of new confirmed infections in the kingdom climbs higher, according to health officials. The Saudi health ministry said in a statement posted online late Wednesday, May 8, 2014 that 18 new confirmed cases of the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome were reported in the capital Riyadh, the western cities of Jiddah, Mecca and Medina, and in the city of Najran, along the border with Yemen.(AP Photo/NIAID - RML, File)

Saudi health authorities reported another five deaths Tuesday from a potentially fatal Middle Eastern respiratory virus that has sickened hundreds in the kingdom.

The previous evening, they reported that the same number of victims had also died from the virus, known as the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome.

A total of 152 people have now died and 495 have been confirmed to have contracted the virus in Saudi Arabia since it was discovered in 2012. Most cases of the disease have been in the desert kingdom.

Four of those confirmed dead Tuesday were previously diagnosed with MERS in the western city of Jiddah. The fifth was one of four new MERS infections identified in the capital, Riyadh.

MERS is part of the coronavirus family of viruses, which includes 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 including fever, breathing problems, pneumonia and kidney failure.

Scientists believe camels likely play a role in initial infections. The disease can then spread between people, but typically only when they are in close contact with one another, such as with infected patients and health-care workers.

American health officials this week confirmed a second U.S. case of MERS. The virus was confirmed in a resident of Saudi Arabia who was visiting Florida. He is being treated in an Orlando hospital.

An earlier, unlinked U.S. patient diagnosed with MERS was released from an Indiana hospital late last week.

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