

Filipino nurse from Saudi Arabia positive for MERS (Update)

September 3 2014

A nurse who flew home from Saudi Arabia last week has been confirmed as the Philippines' second case of Middle East respiratory syndrome.

Results of a test done in the nurse's workplace in eastern Saudi Arabia's Dammam city came back positive after she arrived home, Philippine Health Secretary Enrique Ona said Wednesday.

He said the 37-year-old nurse has not shown MERS symptoms since arriving home Friday. She and her family are quarantined in a hospital in southern Davao City awaiting results from further tests.

Ona said authorities were trying to contact all 249 passengers from Saudi Arabian Airlines Flight 870, which the nurse boarded in Dammam, and the 143 passengers from Cebu Pacific Flight 997, which took her from Manila to General Santos city so they can undergo tests. He said there was only a slim chance that they were infected.

She and a second Filipino nurse both had a history of taking care of MERS patients in Saudi Arabia and traveled home together, but Ona said tests on the second nurse were negative.

The first MERS case in the Philippines was a male nurse who worked in the United Arab Emirates, but subsequent tests found him free of infection.

"The first two cases of MERS-Cov we found both came from other countries," Ona said. "So we can still claim that the Philippines is MERS-Cov free."

The World Health Organization said as of July 23, it has recorded 837 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV globally including at least 291 related deaths.

Most of the cases have occurred in Saudi Arabia and the virus is thought to be primarily acquired through contact with camels.

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Citation: Filipino nurse from Saudi Arabia positive for MERS (Update) (2014, September 3) retrieved 10 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-09-filipino-nurse-saudi-arabia-positive.html>

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