

Health mission urges more Saudi measures to combat MERS

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An international health mission said Monday more measures are needed to combat the spread of MERS in Saudi Arabia, the country worst hit by the coronavirus.

The team of experts said it identified with health authorities in the kingdom the need for "understanding the animal/human interface" including the "modes of infection and transmission."

It also urged "improving [disease prevention](#), especially in health facilities that continue to experience avoidable infections," in a statement issued by the World Health Organisation following the conclusion of the mission to Saudi Arabia.

The mission headed to the desert kingdom after a surge of cases in the past weeks, including 50 reported this month alone as well as infections acquired in health facilities.

A total of 899 people have been infected in the kingdom, of whom 382 have died, since the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) was identified globally in 2012.

The health ministry recorded five deaths on Thursday alone, bringing to 16 the number since February 11.

"When health workers are infected at work, this puts other health-care workers at risk, but also can be a risk to all other patients who seek care

for other health conditions," said the statement.

It said that educating professionals and the public about the virus are "urgently needed," highlighting "significant gaps in community engagement to fully understand routes of infection and the preventive steps that should be taken."

More than 20 countries have been affected by MERS but most cases have been linked to the Middle East.

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