

Newly discovered Ebolavirus may not cause severe disease in humans

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Researchers from the University of Kent's School of Biosciences have provided evidence that a newly discovered Ebolavirus may not be as deadly as other species to humans.

The new *Bombali* [virus](#) was discovered in bats in Sierra Leone and has also now been reported in bats in Kenya. To date, it was unclear whether the *Bombali* virus may be pathogenic to humans.

Dr. Mark Wass and Professor Martin Michaelis developed a [computational approach](#) to compare the amino acid sequences of virus proteins to identify positions that determine whether a virus causes disease in humans.

Their findings showed that certain positions in the VP24 protein of the *Bombali* virus are identical to the Reston virus, another member of the Ebolavirus family that is not pathogenic in humans. This is consistent with the origin of the *Bombali* virus, which was isolated from [fruit bats](#) that were cohabitating with humans in houses and other populated areas. Although this makes [human](#) contact highly likely, no disease outbreaks have been reported

Dr. Wass said: 'Based on our findings, it does not seem likely that the *Bombali* virus causes severe disease in humans. However, we need to be careful as we know that a few mutations may change this and result in another Ebolavirus that poses a threat to humans. Hence, *Bombali* virus evolution should be carefully monitored.'

The study 'Is the *Bombali* virus pathogenic in humans?' is published in the journal *Bioinformatics*.

More information: Henry J Martell et al, Is the bombali virus pathogenic in humans?, *Bioinformatics* (2019). [DOI: 10.1093/bioinformatics/btz267](#)

Provided by University of Kent

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