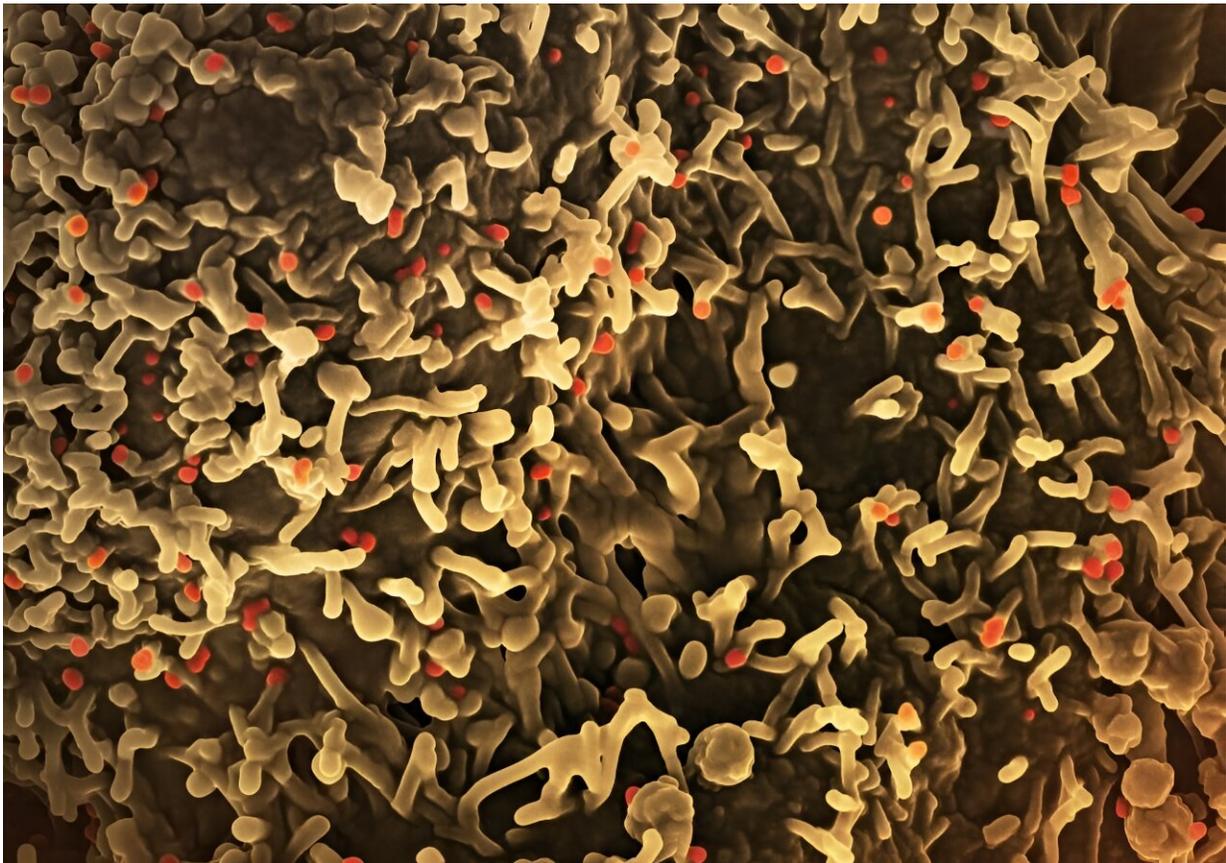


Monkeypox's worldwide spread is a warning, researchers say

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Colorized scanning electron micrograph of mpox virus (orange). Credit: National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

James Cook University researchers examining the spread of the

monkeypox virus say its rapid global spread in 2022, after years of being confined to Central and West Africa, shows the need to remain vigilant against virus outbreaks wherever they occur.

Professor Oyelola Adegboye is JCU's Public Health and Tropical Medicine Adjunct and a Menzies School of Health Research Associate Professor. He said the disease was endemic to Central and West Africa and it was believed that outbreaks in Africa (pre-2022) were a result of human contact with infected animals or their bodily fluids.

"Surveillance data between 2001 and 2015 showed children and adolescents aged 0–14 accounted for more than 70% of the cases, but the 2022 global outbreak showed it was occurring primarily in adults, with almost 97% males," said Dr. Adegboye.

He said monkeypox causes a wide range of symptoms, including fever, headache, muscle pain, swollen [lymph nodes](#), and a distinctive rash.

"There is relatively low human-to-human transmissibility of the virus, with most people experiencing mild illness and recovering within a few weeks, but it can be severe in immunocompromised people.

"Mortality rates in severe cases range from 1% to 10%, depending on the outbreak setting, the specific virus family, and the quality of health care," said Dr. Adegboye.

He said while monkeypox is usually transmitted from animal-to-human and human-to-human in Africa, recent evidence suggests its primary mode of spread elsewhere is through [unprotected sex](#), with a low chance of it also being spread through respiratory droplets.

"As of 18 April 2023, more than 87,000 cases and 120 deaths had been reported in 110 countries," said Dr. Adegboye.

He said while there is no specific cure for the virus, smallpox vaccines are available and have been shown to provide protection against the disease.

"Mass gatherings and the ease of international travel played a pivotal role in the spread of monkeypox.

"It was a relatively rare disease in a remote part of Africa for many years. But as urbanization, [forest loss](#), and land use patterns alter, exposure to and outbreaks of monkeypox and other obscure zoonotic diseases are going to increase. We absolutely cannot afford to be complacent about the risks we face."

Provided by James Cook University

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