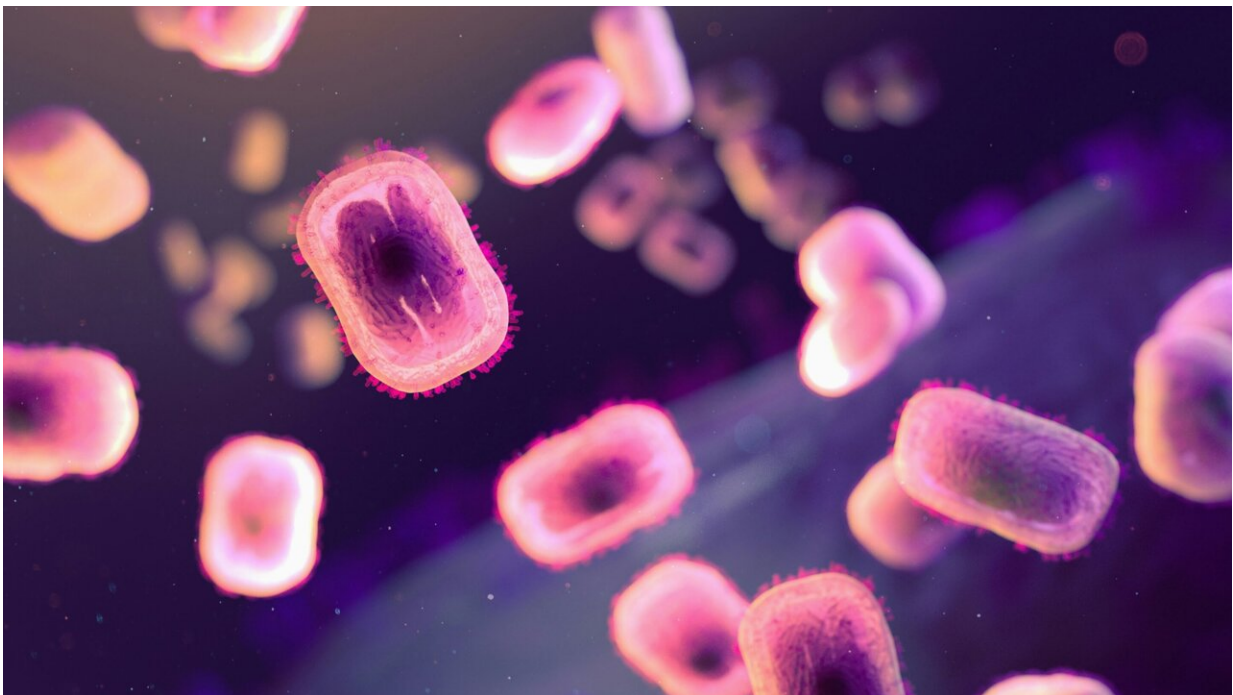


Pakistan's health ministry confirms a case of mpox but more tests are being done for its variant

August 16 2024, by Riaz Khan



Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

Pakistan's health ministry said Friday it has identified a case of mpox, but sequencing is being done to determine whether it is a new variant, days after the World Health Organization declared the spread of mpox [a global health emergency](#).

The case, in a man who had recently returned from a Middle Eastern country, is the first in Pakistan this year but the nature of the variant was yet to be determined. The first case was reported on Thursday by authorities in Sweden.

The ministry in a statement said the man was from Mardan, a district in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province bordering Afghanistan.

It said the ministry has directed officials at border crossing points and airports to ensure strict surveillance and collect samples for medical tests if they see symptoms of the disease in any passenger returning from abroad.

It was unclear which Middle Eastern country the man had visited, and no cases of the new variant have yet been reported in that region. The United Arab Emirates, however, has had 16 confirmed cases of mpox since 2022, according to the WHO. The UAE is particularly affected by transnational outbreaks given its role as a hub connecting East and West with its long-haul carriers Emirates and Etihad.

On Wednesday, the WHO said there have been more than 14,000 cases and 524 deaths in Africa this year, which already exceed last year's figures. More than 96% of all cases and deaths have been in Congo.

The director of public health for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Dr. Irshad Roghani, said the person infected with mpox in Pakistan has mild symptoms. "Contact tracing of the affected person has been started and samples of more people are being obtained," he told The Associated Press.

Roghani said that since 2022, 300 people have been tested in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, of whom two tested positive last year. This is the first case detected this year.

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Citation: Pakistan's health ministry confirms a case of mpox but more tests are being done for its variant (2024, August 16) retrieved 16 August 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2024-08-pakistan-case-mpox-virus.html>

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