



Updates on H7N9 and MERS-CoV

H7N9

The GlobalTimes reported today that China has downgraded the response to H7N9. The Beijing Times reported Monday that the Beijing Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC) announced on Sunday that the city has removed the emergency response to H7N9 bird flu for Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Shandong provinces, Beijing confirmed its first and only case of human infection with H7N9 on April 12 and there have been no new cases of H7N9 for over a week. To date there have been 130 confirmed infections with 36 deaths. There continues to be no evidence of human-to-human transmission.

<http://www.kuna.net.kw/ArticleDetails.aspx?id=2311999&language=en>

Influenza's ability to mutate and a relatively mild winter in China tempers this good news with many experts saying it is too early to say whether or not H7N9 remains a pandemic threat. This does not change anything for the EMS approach to influenza like illness.

MERS-CoV

Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome – Coronavirus has now unofficially entered an eighth country with news coming from the Kuwait News Agency of potential victims in Tunisia. According to the KUNA a Tunisian man was admitted to a hospital after suffering acute respiratory conditions following his return from Saudi Arabia and Qatar. He subsequently died. Worldwide, there have been 41 laboratory-confirmed infections and 20 deaths.

<http://www.kuna.net.kw/ArticleDetails.aspx?id=2311999&language=en>

In an article posted on Nature online, the coronavirus, like its close relative SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome), is thought to be jumping to humans from one or more animal hosts, or reservoirs. The MERS-CoV host is currently unknown, but the virus is genetically closest to bat coronaviruses.

The spate of clusters in hospitals has evoked comparisons with SARS, which sickened many health workers, killing some. The novel coronavirus is not transmitted so easily and, as a result, the number of cases is smaller. But that could just reflect an earlier stage in the evolution of the disease.

<http://www.nature.com/news/scientists-look-to-saudi-arabia-for-coronavirus-clues-1.13000>

To date there have been no reports of either of these viruses in the US, and the risk of human to human exposure is very low. However, EMS agencies should be aware of these situations occurring around the world and practice universal precautions as outlined in our earlier post.



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