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NHS Trusts (England) – Medical Director
NHS England - Area Teams
Consultants in Communicable Diseases
Trust Microbiologists
Clinical Commissioning Group Leads
Critical Care Units

Dear Colleague

UPDATE ON NOVEL CORONAVIRUS INFECTION

This message is to update you on the current global situation of human infection with the novel coronavirus and remind you of the need to remain vigilant. In May 2013 two clusters of severe human cases of the novel coronavirus infection were reported: one in the Eastern part of Saudi Arabia and another in northern France. The full alert, including further information about these two clusters, is given in the attached annex.

Yours sincerely

PROFESSOR DAME SALLY C DAVIES

**CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER
CHIEF SCIENTIFIC ADVISER**

From the Chief Medical Officer, Professor Dame Sally C Davies



ANNEX

GLOBAL SITUATION ON NOVEL CORONAVIRUS INFECTION (nCoV)

From September 2012 to date, WHO has been informed of a total of 40 laboratory confirmed cases of human infection with nCoV, including 20 deaths. Cases have been reported originating from Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Qatar, United Arab Emirates and the UK. The two most recent developments in May 2013 have been:

-- a cluster of cases of novel coronavirus infection primarily linked to a health care facility in the Eastern part of Saudi Arabia. By 16 May, this outbreak involved 21 confirmed cases, including nine deaths. The investigation is ongoing.

--The French authorities have reported two cases of laboratory confirmed nCoV infection. The first case was in a traveller with severe respiratory illness who returned from Dubai on 7 May 2013. Among 120 persons identified as contacts of this case, laboratory tests for nCoV infection were conducted by Pasteur Institute in Paris on five persons with acute respiratory symptoms. One of these tested positive. This second case was a patient who shared a hospital room from 27 to 29 April 2013 with the index case. Although the investigation is continuing, there is no evidence of sustained person-to-person transmission.

Implications

Health care providers in the UK are reminded to remain vigilant for recent travellers returning from areas affected by the virus who develop a severe unexplained respiratory illness. Clinicians are reminded that nCoV infection should be considered even with atypical signs and symptoms in patients who are significantly immune compromised. In addition, unexplained clusters of severe respiratory infection should be investigated, particularly if they occur in the health care setting.

Staff in health care may be contacted about:

- Patients with a severe respiratory illness of unknown origin and who have recently returned from the Middle East.
- The practical arrangements for sampling and following up contacts
- What samples should be taken from cases and contacts and where samples should be sent
- Infection control guidance for cases and contacts

Recommendations

Staff in health care should ensure they are aware of and understand the current situation (as outlined above) in anticipation of any possible queries.

Clinical enquiries about potential cases of severe respiratory infection in people who have recently visited affected country, should be directed to the local infectious disease physician or



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microbiologist who can arrange testing through the Regional Public Health England (PHE) laboratory.

The algorithms for investigation and management of possible cases of novel coronavirus infection and contacts of confirmed cases are available on the [PHE website](#). As this is an evolving situation, these are likely to change, and it is therefore necessary to ensure that the latest version is used.

Infection control guidance and guidance on the management and investigation of cases and contacts is available on the [PHE website](#).

Information is also available for microbiologists and virologists on the [PHE webpage](#) on novel coronavirus. The UK regional screening and referral pathway and algorithm for sampling, handling and transport of material for novel coronavirus investigations are available on the [PHE website](#). Respiratory specimens from cases under investigation should be obtained from the lower respiratory tract for diagnosis where possible.

Please check the [PHE webpage for Novel Coronavirus](#) for any further updates, including travel health advice.

References/ Sources of information

WHO update 15 May 2013: http://www.who.int/csr/don/2013_05_15_ncov/en/index.html

HPA webpage for Novel Coronavirus

<http://www.hpa.org.uk/Topics/InfectiousDiseases/InfectionsAZ/NovelCoronavirus2012/>

WHO has published the [WHO interim guidance](#) on infection prevention and control during health care for probable or confirmed cases of novel coronavirus (nCoV) infection:
http://www.who.int/csr/disease/coronavirus_infections/IPCnCoVguidance_06May13.pdf