

9 January 2013 – To date, a total of nine laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with the novel human coronavirus have been reported to WHO – five cases, including three deaths, from Saudi Arabia, two cases from Qatar and two cases (both fatal) from Jordan.

The novel coronavirus first raised concerns in September 2012 when it caused severe respiratory disease in two patients from the Region. The subsequent discovery of two clusters of cases, one in a family in Saudi Arabia and the second in a group of health care workers in Jordan, increased the urgency of better understanding the virus. The potential of the virus to cause widespread serious consequences is thought to be significant, yet current knowledge of its epidemiology and natural history of infection with this agent is limited. Many critical questions about the source of the virus, its potential for transmission, important exposures and the clinical appearance of disease remain unanswered.

Many activities have already been conducted in investigating the new virus and managing its public health consequences. Within this context, WHO has organized a technical consultative meeting to take place at the WHO Regional Office in Cairo from 14 to 15 January 2013 on the novel human coronavirus. The meeting will bring together representatives of the three countries already affected, in addition to key partners and WHO collaborating centres involved in managing this public health issue, together with WHO experts.

The objectives of the technical consultative meeting are to obtain the most up-to-date scientific and public health understanding of the novel coronavirus based on available information, identify critical knowledge gaps in understanding the current risk and identify additional steps needed to improve the knowledge and research gap. The meeting also aims to provide an update on the current situation in order to increase global awareness and reach consensus on measures to be taken to improve public health preparedness.

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which are known to cause illness in humans and animals. This novel strain has never previously been detected in humans or animals.

WHO has issued an interim case definition which will allow doctors and other health care workers to identify new cases. This case definition will be updated as more information becomes available. The case definition includes criteria for identifying a 'patient under investigation', a 'probable case' and a 'confirmed case'. These criteria rely on clinical,

epidemiological and laboratory information.

The consultation is expected to contribute to reaching an improved understanding of the epidemiology and natural history of infection with the novel coronavirus, an assessment of the global public health risk associated with the appearance of this virus, a consensus list of critical research priorities and a consensus on key preparations needed for surveillance and response.

Sunday 18th of May 2025 04:00:51 AM