

Philippines quarantines man over MERS fears

16 April 2014

Philippine health authorities said Wednesday they have quarantined a Filipino who arrived from the Middle East because he tested positive for the deadly MERS virus.

The man, who arrived in the Philippines on Tuesday, is not yet showing symptoms but has been isolated in hospital, Health Secretary Enrique Ona said.

The Health Department is also quarantining the man's family and tracing the people who had contact with him during his flight to see if they may also be infected with the MERS or Middle East Respiratory Syndrome virus, he added.

"He can infect people so that is why he is quarantined or in isolation," Ona said in a television interview.

Ona said the man, whom he did not name, was reportedly a hospital worker in the United Arab Emirates and may have had contact with someone in that country who died of the MERS virus.

The Filipino was one of those who had a blood sample taken after contact with the deceased, Ona said.

"But before the results were released, he returned to this country. When he was here, the test results came out and it was positive so they informed him at once and alerted us as well," the [health secretary](#) said.

An epidemiologist is being sent to the Middle East to check on the spread of the MERS virus, especially whether it has infected some of the millions of Filipinos working there, he added.

He said the government was trying to confirm reports that a Filipino nurse had died from the virus in the Middle East.

The health secretary urged anyone who had travelled to the Middle East and developed fevers recently to see a doctor.

The Saudi health ministry said Wednesday that a man had died from MERS in the western city of Jeddah, bringing the death toll in the worst-affected country to 71.

The World Health Organisation said Friday that it had been told of 212 laboratory-confirmed cases of MERS infection worldwide, of which 88 had proved fatal.

The MERS virus is considered a deadlier but less-transmissible cousin of the SARS virus that erupted in Asia in 2003 and infected 8,273 people, nine percent of whom died.

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APA citation: Philippines quarantines man over MERS fears (2014, April 16) retrieved 28 August 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-04-philippines-quarantines-mers.html>

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