



## Editorial

# Sudden Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) Fear

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After the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a lot of hassle and concern in several Asian countries about Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV). It is spreading rapidly in many countries at the same time. In Bangladesh, a patient died after being infected with this virus. Although he also had other medical complications. Children and the elderly are more likely to be infected by this virus. This virus was not discovered recently; it was first detected in 2001 in the Netherlands. It is an RNA virus that mainly attacks the respiratory system. Although called a new virus, it is actually very similar to the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) that is often seen in children. This virus has been attacking people for fifty years. Its victims are mainly children under fourteen years of age. One in ten children with respiratory tract infection and almost all children before the age of six have at least once infected with this virus.

This virus is highly infectious and contagious. But the symptoms are not complicated or life-threatening. This virus causes normal infection during winter. We have a natural immune system against it. Some are with little risk such as children under five years of age, newborns, elderly people and patients having chronic bronchitis, bronchial asthma, under steroid treatment, even those suffering from various chronic diseases such as diabetes mellitus, high blood pressure, malignancy, liver disease, heart disease, kidney disease, poor immune system function and physical fitness, pregnant women are all at risk.

This virus spreads the most from early winter to spring, like other respiratory viruses. Like flu, it spreads through the droplets from sneezing and coughing. Airborne particles are spread by air hence crowded places are risky. It can be spread by touching an infected person's hands or body, touching a door handle or shaking hands. This can also spread from person to person by physical contact with an infected person. It can spread if anyone touches his or her mouth, nose and eyes

without washing their hands after touching the infected area or contacting an infected person.

Symptoms of the disease may appear 3-6 days after exposure to an infected person. There is no difference between COVID-19 and HMP virus and no severe complication like COVID-19. Symptoms are of like typical features of influenza, such as cough, nasal congestion, cold, fever, sore throat and in many cases, there is vomiting, loss of appetite and diarrhea. There might be rash in skin. Like other viruses, it is cured by its own within 5-7 days, unless any complications arise.

This new viral disease has no antiviral medication till now. No vaccine has been invented also. Treatment is to take precautions and reduce symptoms. In most cases, symptomatic treatment is given. Doctors advise keeping the body hydrated, drinking warm water and gargling with warm water which is very beneficial to reduce symptoms. Sometimes secondary bacterial infection could lead to develop pneumonia. Antibiotics can be given as per the doctor's advice. Like the treatment of other viral fevers paracetamol, antihistamine, decongestant for nasal congestion, steroid nasal drops, nutritious food are sufficient for recovery. An inhaler or nebulizer containing bronchodilator can be given on doctor's advice if respiratory distress arises. If the fever and illness increase, it is better to visit hospital immediately.

In this viral disease children are more likely to have severe symptoms. These symptoms may include persistent cough, shortness of breath, high fever, dehydration, loss of appetite, vomiting, diarrhoea. The most common symptoms of HMPV infection in elderly people are - nasal congestion, runny nose, persistent cough, mild to moderate fever, body aches, sore throat, difficulty in breathing. So far, children, elderly people and those with weakened immune systems are more likely to be affected by the virus and are more prone to complications.

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As a precaution, it is better for children not to attend school for a few days if they have symptoms of common cold. A safe distance should be maintained from infected patients and those with common cold symptoms. The etiquette of sneezing and coughing should be maintained specially in the public places and gatherings. It is the best to wear a mask when going outside the house and in crowded places. It's also better to wash hands thoroughly with soap or use hand sanitizer after coming from outside or after attending a patient. It is not right to touch the nose and mouth without washing the hands.

We were all worried when HMPV was first detected overseas. Everyone was worried whether the virus would enter the country. If it would

affect life like Corona? We were worried that HMPV would enter this country and cause numerous fatalities. Finally, we saw that this virus did not enter this country and only one person died, a 30-year-old woman. She died on January 15, 2025, while undergoing treatment at the Infectious Diseases Hospital in Mohakhali, Dhaka, Bangladesh. The death of the lady with HMPV infection have sparked concern but doctors said that the virus is not as deadly as the corona virus and protection from this virus is possible through health awareness and following hand hygiene rules.

#### **Sources**

Electronic media, Internet.