

## f A case of suspected MERS CoV

On 10 February the NICD received a request for Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) laboratory testing from a private laboratory. The patient was a previously healthy 50-year-old male, who had returned to South Africa 10 days previously. He had travelled to Jeddah, Mecca and Medina for 3 days and did not report any exposures to health care facilities or camels. He developed upper respiratory tract symptoms 5 days after his return that did not respond to antibiotic treatment. He was admitted on 8 February with fever and pneumonia. Blood cultures and influenza PCR on respiratory samples were negative. A nasopharyngeal aspirate was sent to NICD for testing for MERS-CoV and tested negative on 11 February. By 13 February the patient was clinically improved and was discharged well.

MERS-CoV is an emerging infectious disease which causes severe respiratory illness. It was first identified in September 2012 in a 60-year-old patient from Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, who died from a severe respiratory infection in June 2012. It is important to consider MERS-CoV in the

differential diagnosis of patients with pneumonia who have a travel history to the Arabian Peninsula within the last 14 days. A history of admission to or working within health care facilities, or close contacts with camels, are additional factors that may increase the index of suspicion. If MERS-CoV is suspected, early isolation with strict airborne precautions is essential until the diagnosis has been excluded. The NICD offers free testing for MERS-CoV for any suspected cases meeting the case definition. The preferred specimen is a lower respiratory tract sample such as sputum or bronchoalveolar lavage but upper respiratory tract specimens such as nasopharyngeal aspirates can be tested. All cases must be discussed with the NICD doctor on call to confirm if testing is indicated, before specimens are submitted. There is no specific therapy and treatment is supportive. Detailed guidelines for MERS-CoV case finding can be found at [http://www.nicd.ac.za/assets/files/Guidelines%20for%20MERS-CoV%2024%](http://www.nicd.ac.za/assets/files/Guidelines%20for%20MERS-CoV%2024%20)

**Source:** Centre for Respiratory Diseases and Meningitis, NICD-NHLS; (cherylc@nicd.ac.za)