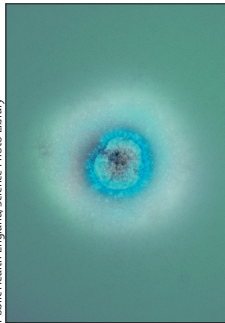




Since January 2020 Elsevier has created a COVID-19 resource centre with free information in English and Mandarin on the novel coronavirus COVID-19. The COVID-19 resource centre is hosted on Elsevier Connect, the company's public news and information website.

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MERS-CoV: a global challenge



Centre For Infections/
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In her closing remarks at the World Health Assembly in Geneva last week, WHO's Director-General Margaret Chan announced that the new Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) was her present "greatest concern".

What do we know about MERS-CoV? The novel virus was first reported in September, 2012, in a patient in Saudi Arabia. As of June 2, WHO has been informed of 53 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection, including 30 deaths. Most cases have arisen in the Middle East (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates), with a smaller number of cases present elsewhere (Tunisia, Germany, UK, France, and Italy)—either related to travellers returning from the region or transferred to the country for care. Common symptoms in patients are acute, serious respiratory illness with fever, cough, shortness of breath, and breathing difficulties. Many of those infected develop severe pneumonia.

There have been small clusters of infection in several countries suggesting that person-to-person transmission is possible when close contact occurs. But there is no

evidence of sustained transmission. Last week, a *Lancet* Article showed that the virus's incubation could be longer than previously reported—9–12 days instead of 1–9 days—which has implications for length of quarantine needed to prevent secondary cases.

Many unanswered questions remain about MERS-CoV, including the source of, and main risk factors for, infection. A collaborative global research effort will help close the gaps in knowledge. In this regard, news that the scientists at Erasmus Medical Centre, Netherlands, who first identified the virus, have applied for a patent on virus data has caused consternation. The researchers have publicly responded to say that they have sent the virus free of charge to many public research and health institutions and they will continue to do so. They have told media that they applied for a patent to ensure companies invest in making diagnostics, vaccines, and antiviral medication. Let us hope their expectations prove correct.

Free information sharing, trust, and research cooperation will be crucial to aid prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of this evolving global health threat. ■ *The Lancet*

For *The Lancet* Article on the virus's incubation see [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(13\)60982-4/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(13)60982-4/fulltext)

Ready, set, go for physical activity



Björn Svensson/Science Photo Library

Physical education is a divisive subject at school—children seem to love it or hate it. But with increases in obesity and rises in sedentary living, physical activity has muscled its way to the top of government and health agendas worldwide. The US Institute of Medicine (IOM) released a consensus report on May 23, identifying young children and adolescents as a group that has grown accustomed to sedentary living: only half of those in the USA meet guidelines recommending at least 60 min of vigorous or moderate-intensity physical activity every day. Recognising that young people spend much of their life at school, and that schools support and promote their physical and emotional wellbeing, the report lists recommendations for schools and governments to help students become more active.

As stated in our 2012 Physical Activity Series, physical activity is not just about exercise to control obesity; regular activity improves mental health, cognition, and general academic performance, and reduces anxiety and depression, as well as adding to quality of life in terms of

socialising, for example. The IOM report emphasises that changes in uptake of activity in young people will need a whole-school approach. Government organisations, district and school administrators, teachers, and parents should all support and encourage children and adolescents to make lifestyle changes and to instil lifelong physical activity habits. Healthy attitudes to physical activity established early in life are crucial: worryingly, our Series showed that roughly 30% of adults worldwide are physically inactive. Guidance from NICE, released on May 29, calls for primary care practitioners and nurses to do more to identify adults not meeting physical activity guidelines and offers encouragement to reduce the cost of inactivity to people's health and to the wider economy.

Physical activity should be a priority for all schools, but, importantly, we must not allow children who do not excel in sport to drift or be ignored. Children should associate positively with active behaviours early in life to carry and maintain a healthy relationship with physical activity through to adulthood. ■ *The Lancet*

For the *Institute of Medicine* report see <http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2013/Educating-the-Student-Body-Taking-Physical-Activity-and-Physical-Education-to-School.aspx>

For the 2012 *Lancet* Series see <http://www.thelancet.com/series/physical-activity>

For the *NICE* guidance see <http://www.nice.org.uk/newsroom/pressreleases/GPsPlayGreaterRoleGettingNationMoving.jsp>