

Ongoing lack of MERS vaccine inexcusable as virus spreads in South Korea

Three years after the mysterious MERS virus first emerged in humans, scientists and drugmakers say there is no excuse for not having a vaccine that could have protected those now falling sick and dying in South Korea.

The facts behind the coronavirus that causes Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) have been slow to emerge, partly due to a secretive response in Saudi Arabia, which has suffered an outbreak stretching back to 2012.

But scientists do know that it is similar to the deadly SARS virus, that it probably originated in bats, that it is linked to camels, and can pass from person to person. They also understand its molecular structure.

That all yields scientific detail for researchers to begin developing a vaccine, and there is clear frustration that work on one has barely begun.

The problem is that big pharmaceutical firms are uncertain about the economics of such a vaccine and no governments have yet offered to underwrite a major research effort.

“The question is: How long are we going to wait around and just follow these outbreaks before we get serious about making vaccines?” said Adrian Hill, a professor and director at the Jenner Institute at Britain’s Oxford University.

“There is no sign of MERS going away. It’s been around since 2012. And there is really clear evidence now of human-to-human transmission.”

South Korea said on Monday 150 people there have been infected with MERS in an outbreak started by a businessman returning from the Middle East. Sixteen have died.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [Why no MERS vaccine? Lack of foresight frustrates scientists](#)