

Newly identified chimp pathogen found to be 100% fatal. Could it jump to humans?

[A deadly disease killing chimpanzees in a Sierra Leone sanctuary is] caused by a newly discovered species of bacterium and comes as the world wrestles with a devastating [pandemic caused by another novel foe](#), the new coronavirus.

Although the chimpanzee illness has yet to be found in a human being, the two species share about 99% of their hereditary material, or DNA.

“There are very few pathogens that infect chimpanzees without infecting humans and very few pathogens that infect humans without infecting chimpanzees,” said [Tony Goldberg](#), one of the authors of [the paper](#) and a University of Wisconsin-Madison professor of epidemiology.

Lethal diseases, including Ebola and HIV, have jumped from great apes to humans. Other diseases, such as influenza and polio, have gone the opposite route, passing from humans to apes.

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[Diseases with 100% fatality rates](#) are very rare. Ebola, one of the most-feared illnesses in humans, kills about 50% of those infected.

“The staff at Tacugama (Sanctuary in Freetown, Sierra Leone) are super worried. It looks like something we need to be concerned about,” Goldberg said.

The new bacterium is called *Sarcina troglodytae*; the newly described disease it causes has been named Epizootic Neurologic and Gastroenteric Syndrome, or ENGS.

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