The impact of PHCC infection control protocol in high-risk primary healthcare centers in the prevention of healthcare MERS-CoV outbreaks

Khalid Elawad*, Ogra Marufu, Elmoubasher Abd Farag

ABSTRACT

The Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV) is an emerging infection that causes severe illness in patients, particularly those with comorbidities; and has a high mortality rate. Healthcare associated outbreaks have been reported across the Gulf region and the Republic of Korea. While there have been cases of MERS-CoV in Qatar, no healthcare associated outbreaks have been reported. The aim of this paper is to give a description of the infection prevention and control protocol implemented by the Primary Health Care Corporation to manage suspected or probable cases of MERS-CoV in the primary health care setting. This paper focuses on Alshahania Health Centre which is considered to be a high risk area due to its proximity to the camel shelter and race track. In order to gain an understanding of how patients visiting the health center are managed. Data was collected through a visit to the Alshahania Health Centre which included discussions with staff and documentation review. Our findings show that the infection control protocol implemented at Alshahania Health Centre is very robust and ensures that staff has clearly defined responsibilities in the management of a suspected case of MERS-CoV. A dedicated Isolation Team ensures a timely risk assessment is carried out which then triggers actions that reduce the risk of exposure to both patients and staff. The experience at Alshahania Health Centre also demonstrates that good communication and leadership are important factors in order to successfully embed infection control in clinical practice and prevent healthcare associated outbreaks of MERS-CoV.