

DEMYSTIFYING SCIENCE: WHAT ARE HANTAVIRUSES?

Relevant for: Health, Education & Human Resources | Topic: Health & Sanitation and related issues

First identified in 1993, hantaviruses cause severe and sometimes fatal respiratory infections and are known to infect lung cells. Though relatively rare, infections caused by them are expected to increase in the coming decades as temperatures across the globe rise due to climate change. The danger is that we are totally unprepared for this possibility. Hantavirus is transmitted to humans who inhale the virus from the urine, faeces, or saliva of infected rodents. Infection with hantavirus can progress to Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS). Early HPS symptoms include fatigue, fever and muscle aches, followed after a week or so by coughing and shortness of breath. HPS has a mortality rate of around 40%, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. No treatments or vaccines are available. A study on hantaviruses has been published in *Nature*, and its findings could point to a strategy to fight HPS.

Fun facts or complex puzzles, science contains mysteries ranging from the minute to the magnificent. Taste science! Take this quiz!

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