The return of Nipah virus in India: Challenges and Recommendations

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Abstract

Viruses have consistently posed a significant threat to global health, varying in their effect from mild asymptomatic cases to full-blown incapacitating illnesses. India, a country with a tremendous population of over 1.3 billion, encounters unique challenges when managing public health crises, such as the recent re-emergence of the deadly zoonotic Nipah virus (NiV) in Kerala. Our commentary highlights the history of NiV outbreaks in light of the two primary pathways of virus transmission, animal-to-human and human-to-human. We discuss common presenting symptoms of NiV and risk factors contributing to its spread, proposing possible measures to tackle the current challenges in timely diagnosis and infection control. Owing to its high mutation and mortality rate, the NiV outbreak could have potentially transitioned into the next global pandemic, which calls for the implementation of stringent policies and infective protocols by the government and health authorities to curb any future outbreaks.

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