

## MERS-CoV

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### *To the Editor,*

The recent report on MERS-CoV is very interesting.<sup>1</sup> Balkhair et al. mentioned that "our current knowledge on this virus is sparse should not induce unnecessary panic or fear, instead it should promote vigilance and a state of preparedness"<sup>1</sup> and "over reaction to the current situation may lead to significant clinical, economic and epidemiological impacts among others."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the problem has existed in the Gulf Region for months and it is still the present public health problem.<sup>2</sup> The remaining question, is how to control the panic and how to promote a good preparedness. The role of the mass media should be considered. Referring to the previous pandemic of novel H1N1 influenza, the lesson learnt can be applied to this situation. According to the recent report on "framing of Influenza A (H1N1) pandemic in a Singaporean newspaper," Basnyat and Lee concluded that "news coverage during the H1N1 pandemic reflected how the newspaper framed and mediated the information flow, amplified a positive tone for the government response."<sup>3</sup> In fact, the role of newspaper and other mass media during new emerging disease pandemic is an interesting issue. It is of no doubt that, the mass media can bring both positive and negative attitude. In addition, some information in the newspaper might be incorrect. Lee et al. previously noted, "evolution of information from press release to news is marked by significant changes in media frames."<sup>4</sup> It is an interesting issue on how to accredit the content on the new emerging disease in the newspaper.

According to the suggestion by Sandell et al., "governments need to actively incorporate the media into pandemic communication planning."<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the process has to be transparent and there should not be hidden or disguised information for

the general population.<sup>6</sup> To control the possible panic during emerging infection, the control of the accuracy of information in the newspaper and generalization of such information become the issues to be addressed.<sup>6</sup>

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