A 74-year-old man died of Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever (CCHF) on August 8 at the Welfare Complex of Avila, approximately 100 km (60 miles) northwest of Madrid (Spain).

He experienced a tick bite during an outdoor activity in July 2018 in the town of Heléchosa de los Montes (Badajoz).

The National Center of Microbiology of the Carlos III Health Institute has confirmed CCHF infection. A few people are under healthcare surveillance, most of them are healthcare workers directly exposed to the patient’s biological fluids and their body temperature is monitored twice per day.

Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever (CCHF) is an emerging infectious disease included in the Research & Development (R&D) Blueprint by WHO. The list identifies the eight diseases that pose a public health risk because of their epidemic potential and for which there are no, or insufficient, countermeasures.

CCHF is caused by a virus of the Bunyaviridae family, a single strand RNA virus, primarily transmitted by ticks of the genus Hyalomma, although it can also be transmitted by direct contact with biological samples of infected patients.

The CCHF case fatality rate range between 10 and 40%. CCHF is endemic in Africa, the Balkans, the Middle East and Asian countries south of the 50th parallel north – the geographical limit of the principal tick vector. Following infection by a tick bite, the incubation period is usually one to three days, with a maximum of nine days.

In 2016, the first two CCHF cases were confirmed in Spain: a 62-year-old man who died on Aug 25, 2016 after a tick bite on a walk through the Avila countryside, and the nurse who attended him (see https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa1615162).

Avila is located along one the popular Camino de Santiago route. Pilgrims or others engaged in outdoor recreational activities are requested to wear appropriate clothing and shoes during field trips to prevent tick bites. It is also recommended to walk along roads and to use repellents for people and pets, in addition to removing any ticks as soon as possible.
Clinicians should remain alert to the possibility of CCHF cases from people coming from the above mentioned region of Spain presenting with fever, myalgia, dizziness, neck pain and stiffness, backache, headache, sore eyes and photophobia, especially after a tick bite.

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