

Unique respiratory virus is identified

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Researchers have discovered a virus associated with lower respiratory tract infections -- the leading cause of children and infant hospitalizations.

Although a number of viruses can cause LRTI, about 12 percent to 39 percent of such cases have an undetermined origin. To determine if an unidentified virus contributes to LRTI, Tobias Allander and colleagues at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Sweden, studied viral DNA in lung samples from Swedish hospital patients.

The researchers detected seven virus species in the samples, one of which was a human bocavirus provisionally named HBoV. All HBoV-positive samples came from infants and children.

To investigate whether HBoV is directly associated with lung infections, the researchers tested 540 respiratory tract samples collected from a pediatric infectious disease ward. They found 17 children with LRTI were positive for HBoV.

HBoV was found primarily in samples negative for other viruses, suggesting it was the cause of LRTI in those cases. The researchers also suggest their large-scale DNA screening method may be useful to uncover other viruses responsible for diseases of unknown origin.

The research appears in the online early edition of the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

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