**Male, 35 years old
May 27–29**
A man who shared a hospital room with the first patient in the South Korean MERS outbreak infected the most people. On May 27, he went to Samsung Medical Center in Seoul, where he had to wait in the emergency room for a bed to become available. Over the next two and a half days, more than 80 people who had passed through the ER contracted the virus.
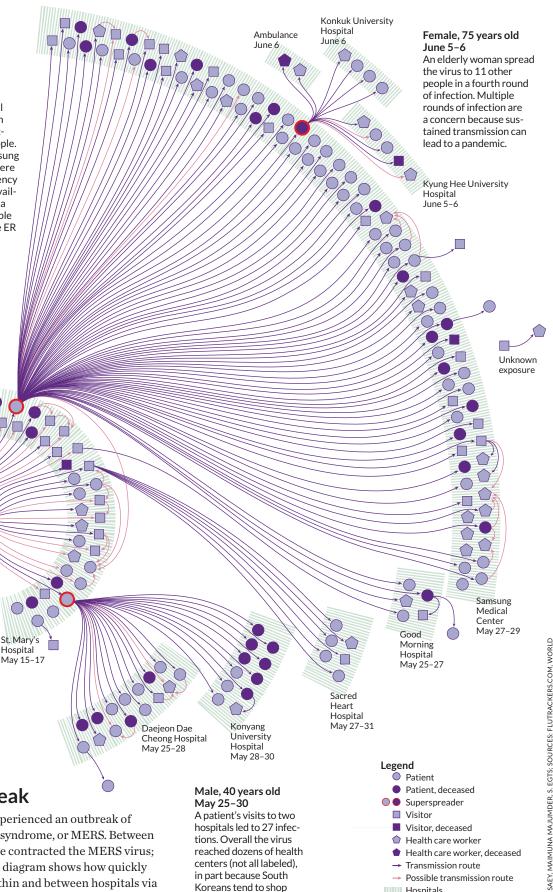
Ambulance
June 6

Konkuk University
Hospital
June 6

**Female, 75 years old
June 5–6**
An elderly woman spread the virus to 11 other people in a fourth round of infection. Multiple rounds of infection are a concern because sustained transmission can lead to a pandemic.

Kyung Hee University
Hospital
June 5–6

Unknown
exposure

**Male, 68 years old
May 15–17**
South Korean officials traced the MERS outbreak to a businessman who visited the Middle East in April and early May. Soon after returning, the man was admitted to St. Mary's Hospital in Pyeongtaek, where he infected about 30 people, mostly visitors and fellow patients.

St. Mary's
Hospital
May 15–17

Daejeon Dae
Cheong Hospital
May 25–28

Konyang
University
Hospital
May 28–30

Sacred
Heart
Hospital
May 27–31

Good
Morning
Hospital
May 25–27

Samsung
Medical
Center
May 27–29

Anatomy of
a MERS outbreak

In 2015, South Korea experienced an outbreak of Middle East respiratory syndrome, or MERS. Between May and July, 186 people contracted the MERS virus; 38 eventually died. This diagram shows how quickly the pathogen spread within and between hospitals via a handful of "superspreaders." — *Tina Hesman Saey*

**Male, 40 years old
May 25–30**
A patient's visits to two hospitals led to 27 infections. Overall the virus reached dozens of health centers (not all labeled), in part because South Koreans tend to shop around for the best care.

Legend
- ○ Patient
- ● Patient, deceased
- ⊙ ● Superspreader
- ☐ Visitor
- ■ Visitor, deceased
- ⬠ Health care worker
- ⬟ Health care worker, deceased
- → Transmission route
- → Possible transmission route
- Hospitals, major exposure dates