

# Hundreds could die as scientists identify first case of 'second wave' vCJD

Another 350 people could die from the human form of mad cow disease, scientists have warned, after the first case of a "second wave" of the disease was identified.

By Kate Devlin, Medical Correspondent  
Last Updated: 6:40AM GMT 18 Dec 2008

A patient diagnosed with variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD) has a different genetic make-up to previous victims, they said.

Scientists have previously warned that the disease could take much longer to manifest itself in many people.

They believe that this is because they contain different chromosomes in their DNA.

All cases of vCJD that have been identified in Britain have so far had the genetic make up MM, found in 42 per cent of the population.

The new case has been found in a person with the make-up MV, carried by 47 per cent of the population.

Variant CJD is part of a group of diseases known as prion disease, which can also appear spontaneously.

Chris Higgins, the Chair of the government's Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC), which advises on variant CJD, told the BBC's Newsnight programme: "The individual has been diagnosed on a clinical basis only and also because of the individual's age it does look more likely to be variant CJD than another form of prion disease."

If the diagnosis is confirmed by a biopsy, the second wave could double the death toll from vCJD.

"Given that 160-170 MM individuals were infected we would estimate that the number of MV victims would be a maximum of 300 to 350 (and) probably between 50 and 350."

He added that the patient had been confirmed as an MV genotype.

Last week Hans Kretzschmar, an expert in the disease from the Ludwig-Maximilians University and the Helmholtz Zentrum in Munich, warned in the Lancet Neurology journal that such a case would raise fears that "a second wave of vCJD with a longer incubation time might hit these shores, but we do not know if this will be a tidal wave or just an imperceptible ripple".

## Related Content

### More on Health News

['Second wave' of mad cow disease could hit Britain, scientists warn](#)

['Dramatic' results of CJD treatment](#)

[Breakthrough test for human mad cow disease](#)

[Professor warns of new CJD epidemic](#)

['We have to be prepared to deal with a major epidemic'](#)

[Patients advised not to cancel transfusions](#)

[New fears over vCJD](#)

[Back to top](#)