What is hantavirus, disease that killed Gene Hackman's wife

Betsy Arakawa, wife of Oscar-winning actor Gene Hackman, died from a respiratory illness linked to hantavirus, a rare disease transmitted by infected rodents, officials have confirmed.

Hantavirus refers to a strain of viruses carried by rodents, primarily transmitted to humans through inhalation of airborne particles from dried rodent droppings.Infections typically occur when the virus becomes airborne from a rodent's urine, droppings, or saliva, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).Though rare, it can also spread through rodent bites or scratches. In North America, deer mice are the most common carriers, according to the Mayo Clinic.The virus can cause two severe illnesses. The first, Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome - the most common strain in the US - was the illness that led to Ms Arakawa's death, officials say.

Symptoms often start with fatigue, fever, and muscle aches, followed by headaches, dizziness, chills, and abdominal issues. If respiratory symptoms develop, the mortality rate is approximately 38%, according to the CDC.he second illness, Haemorrhagic Fever with Renal syndrome, is more severe and primarily affects the kidneys.Hantavirus refers to a strain of viruses carried by rodents, primarily transmitted to humans through inhalation of airborne particles from dried rodent droppings.

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Most of the cases were found in rural areas of western states like California, Washington, Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado.The agency began surveillance for hantavirus diseases in 1993 during an outbreak of severe respiratory illness near the Four Corners region of the US where Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Utah all meet.There may be around 150,000 cases of Haemorrhagic Fever with Renal syndrome worldwide each year, according to a report from the National Institutes of Health. More than half occur in China.The agency also recommends sealing entry points in basements or attics where rodents may enter homes.

Wearing protective gear is also suggested when cleaning up rodent droppings to avoid inhaling contaminated air.