

Cluster of Carbapenem Resistant Acinetobacter cases in Alice Ho Miu Ling Nethersole Hospital

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority.

The spokesperson for Alice Ho Miu Ling Nethersole Hospital made the following announcement today (November 17):

Five male patients and three female patients (aged 64 to 89) in a medical ward have been confirmed to be carriers of Carbapenem Resistant Acinetobacter since October 30. Four of them are currently under medical surveillance and isolation treatment at Tai Po Hospital with stable condition, while the other four patients have been discharged.

Following the activation of the Emergency Response Level in public hospitals, the visiting arrangement has been suspended. The following enhanced infection control measures have been implemented according to established guidelines:

1. Enhanced cleaning and disinfection of the ward concerned;
2. Applied stringent contact precautions and enhanced hand hygiene of staff and patients; and
3. Enhanced patient and environmental screening procedures.

The cases have been reported to the Hospital Authority Head Office and the Centre for Health Protection. The hospital will closely monitor all other patients in the ward.

Man sentenced for breaching compulsory quarantine order

A 76-year-old man was sentenced to immediate imprisonment for 14 days by the Tuen Mun Magistrates' Courts today (November 17) for violating the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap 599C) (the Regulation).

The man was issued a compulsory quarantine order when he entered Hong Kong on November 2, stating that he must conduct quarantine at home for 14 days. He did not enter the place of quarantine without reasonable excuse nor permission given by an authorised officer and tried to leave Hong Kong on the same day. He was stopped by an immigration officer at the Shenzhen Bay

Control Point. He was charged with contravening sections 8(4) and 8(5) of the Regulation and was sentenced by the Tuen Mun Magistrates' Courts today to immediate imprisonment for 14 days.

Pursuant to the Regulation, starting from February 8, save for exempted persons, all persons who have stayed in the Mainland, Macao or Taiwan in the 14 days preceding arrival in Hong Kong, regardless of their nationality or travel documents, will be subject to compulsory quarantine for 14 days. Moreover, pursuant to the Compulsory Quarantine of Persons Arriving at Hong Kong from Foreign Places Regulation (Cap 599E), starting from March 19, all persons arriving from countries or territories outside China would also be subject to compulsory quarantine for 14 days. Breaching a quarantine order is a criminal offence and offenders are subject to a maximum fine of \$25,000 and imprisonment for six months.

A spokesman for the Department of Health said the sentence sends a clear message to the community that breaching a compulsory quarantine order is a criminal offence that the Government will not tolerate, and solemnly reminded the public to comply with the Regulation. As of today, a total of 68 persons have been convicted by the courts for breaching compulsory quarantine orders and have received sentences including immediate imprisonment for up to three months or a fine of \$15,000. The spokesman reiterated that resolute actions will be taken against anyone who has breached the relevant regulations.

"Return2hk – Travel Scheme for Hong Kong Residents returning from Guangdong Province or Macao without being subject to quarantine under the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C)" to open for application tomorrow

"Return2hk – Travel Scheme for Hong Kong Residents returning from Guangdong Province or Macao without being subject to quarantine under the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C)" (Return2hk Scheme) will be open for application from tomorrow (November 18). Hong Kong residents who are currently in Guangdong Province or Macao will be exempted from the 14-day compulsory quarantine requirement when

they return to Hong Kong under the Return2hk Scheme upon fulfilment of all the conditions specified under sections 12 and 12A of the Regulation.

Quota applications

The first batch of quotas under the Return2hk Scheme will be open for application from 9am tomorrow until 6pm on November 20 (Friday) for bookings to return to Hong Kong between November 23 (Monday) and November 29 (Sunday). Hong Kong residents who wish to return to Hong Kong under the Return2hk Scheme should apply under a quota using the online booking system (www.quotabooking.gov.hk). A daily quota of 3 000 has been set for Shenzhen Bay Port, while that for the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) Hong Kong Port is 2 000.

Quota allocation will be administered on a first-come, first-served basis. The online booking system will be open each Wednesday at 9am and run until 6pm on Friday to accept quota applications for the seven-day period of the following week (i.e. Monday to Sunday).

Eligibility

Any Hong Kong resident aged 18 or above who is currently in Guangdong Province or Macao may apply under a quota through the Return2hk Scheme booking system during the above-mentioned opening hours of the system. When making an application, the applicant is required to provide his/her Hong Kong identity card number, and to specify the date and the boundary control point (i.e. Shenzhen Bay Port or the HZMB Hong Kong Port) to be used for the return. In the same application, he/she may also apply under the quota for three accompanying Hong Kong residents at most. Applications for Hong Kong residents who are under 18 should be made on their behalf by their parents or guardians, and the number of their Hong Kong identity card or other personal identity document(s) (e.g. Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) passport, HKSAR re-entry permit, birth certificate or other passports) should be provided.

A Government spokesman stressed that Hong Kong residents who can fulfil all the specified conditions and are returning to Hong Kong under the Return2hk Scheme should still exercise self-monitoring of their health conditions for at least 14 days after their entry into Hong Kong. They should observe the points listed in the "Health-monitoring Checklist for Inbound Travellers". If they feel unwell, they should seek medical advice promptly and reveal their travel history to medical practitioners.

Details about the Return2hk Scheme, including those relating to nucleic acid testing, documents to be provided, health code conversion and more, are available at the "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (return2hk.gov.hk or www.quotabooking.gov.hk). Members of the public may also call the hotline of the Return2hk Scheme at 3142 2330 if they have any enquiries.

FEHD smashes suspected illegal private columbarium in Hung Hom

The Private Columbaria Affairs Office (PCAO) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) cracked down on a suspected illegal private columbarium in Hung Hom this morning (November 17).

The operator of the private columbarium in this case was suspected of keeping ashes at the premises without a licence under the Private Columbaria Ordinance.

The Court issued a search warrant to PCAO officers to authorise them to search the above-mentioned premises. During the operation, PCAO officers seized a number of exhibits and arrested two persons. An investigation is ongoing.

Under the Ordinance, any person who operates, keeps, manages or in any other way has control of a columbarium otherwise than under a licence commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of \$2 million and imprisonment for three years, or on conviction on indictment to a fine of \$5 million and imprisonment for seven years.

A spokesman for the FEHD said, "The department will continue to take stringent enforcement action against illegally operated private columbaria. Members of the public should not buy or rent niches from any unlicensed private columbaria.

"If members of the public detect any activities of illegally operating a private columbarium, they should immediately report it to the PCAO by calling the hotline 3142 2300."

CHP investigates four additional confirmed cases of COVID-19

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health has announced that as of 0.00am, November 17, the CHP was investigating four additional confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), taking the number of cases to 5 471 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 5 470 confirmed cases and one probable case).

Among the newly reported cases announced, three had a travel history during the incubation period.

A total of 130 cases were recorded in the past 14 days (from November 3 to 16), including 33 local cases (in which 18 have unknown sources).

The CHP's epidemiological investigations and relevant contact tracing on the confirmed cases are ongoing. For case details and contact tracing information, please see the Annex or the list of buildings with confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the past 14 days and the latest local situation of COVID-19 available on the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk).

A spokesman for the CHP said, "During the CHP's epidemiological investigations and relevant contact tracing on the confirmed cases, we will compile and upload (www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/building_list_eng.pdf) a list of buildings that confirmed patients had visited from two days before the onset of symptoms. Given that cases of local infection continue to occur from time to time, members of the public are urged to seek medical attention immediately if they believe that they had visited the same place at an identical time with a confirmed patient and feel unwell subsequently. If they remain asymptomatic but are concerned that they have been infected, they can also visit the Hospital Authority's designated general out-patient clinics (www.ha.org.hk/haho/ho/covid-19/GOPC_extend_EN.pdf) to obtain specimen collection packs and collect deep throat saliva specimens for free COVID-19 testing."

In view of the severe epidemic situation, the CHP called on members of the public to avoid going out, having social contact and dining out. They should put on a surgical mask and maintain stringent hand hygiene when they need to go out. The CHP strongly urged the elderly to stay home as far as possible and avoid going out. They should consider asking their family and friends to help with everyday tasks such as shopping for basic necessities.

The spokesman said, "Given that the situation of COVID-19 infection remains severe and that there is a continuous increase in the number of cases reported around the world, members of the public are strongly urged to avoid all non-essential travel outside Hong Kong.

"The CHP also strongly urges the public to maintain at all times strict personal and environmental hygiene, which is key to personal protection against infection and prevention of the spread of the disease in the community. On a personal level, members of the public should wear a surgical mask when having respiratory symptoms, taking public transport or staying in crowded places. They should also perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes.

"As for household environmental hygiene, members of the public are advised to maintain drainage pipes properly, regularly pour water into drain outlets (U-traps) and cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use. After using the toilet, they should put the toilet lid down before flushing

to avoid spreading germs."

Moreover, the Government has launched the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk) for announcing the latest updates on various news on COVID-19 infection and health advice to help the public understand the latest updates. Members of the public may also gain access to information via the COVID-19 WhatsApp Helpline launched by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer. Simply by saving 9617 1823 in their phone contacts or clicking the link wa.me/85296171823?text=hi, they will be able to obtain information on COVID-19 as well as the "StayHomeSafe" mobile app and wristband via WhatsApp.

To prevent pneumonia and respiratory tract infections, members of the public should always maintain good personal and environmental hygiene. They are advised to:

- Wear a surgical mask when taking public transport or staying in crowded places. It is important to wear a mask properly, including performing hand hygiene before wearing and after removing a mask;
- Perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes, after touching public installations such as handrails or doorknobs, or when hands are contaminated by respiratory secretions after coughing or sneezing;
- Maintain drainage pipes properly and regularly (about once a week) pour about half a litre of water into each drain outlet (U-trap) to ensure environmental hygiene;
- Cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use;
- After using the toilet, put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs;
- Wash hands with liquid soap and water, and rub for at least 20 seconds. Then rinse with water and dry with a disposable paper towel. If hand washing facilities are not available, or when hands are not visibly soiled, performing hand hygiene with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub is an effective alternative;
- Cover your mouth and nose with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissues into a lidded rubbish bin, then wash hands thoroughly; and
- When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, refrain from work or attending class at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly.