

CHP announces positive case with vaccine strain contamination

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (January 8) said that according to the test result of the DH's Public Health Laboratory Services Branch (PHLSB) for confirmation of a case tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 virus, it indicates that the sample was possibly contaminated by vaccine strain. As the sample was taken by a private doctor, the CHP visited the relevant clinic with an expert to understand the situation. Initial result revealed that the positive test results of the sample were not caused by infection. Hence, the relevant case will not be classified as SARS-CoV-2 virus infection.

The case involves a 53-year-old female patient living in Block B, The Crescent, 13 Ho Man Tin Hill Road, Ho Man Tin with no recent travel history. She received three doses of COVID-19 vaccination (CoronaVac) in Hong Kong. She attended a banquet at Reserva Ibérica Tapas Bar & Restaurant, Shop 10, 1/F, Causeway Centre, 28 Harbour Road, Wan Chai in the evening on January 3. She is asymptomatic. Her family member who is a private doctor took a sample from her on January 6 with a testing kit which was stored at the doctor's clinic. The clinic offers COVID-19 vaccination (CoronaVac) for the public.

The sample tested preliminary positive by a private laboratory with a Ct value of 35/36. Testing by the PHLSB confirmed that the sample does not carry the N501Y, L452R, E484K or T478K mutant strains but carried the D614D strain which is compatible with the SARS-CoV-2 vaccine strain. The two test results for the virus after admission to the hospital were negative and she did not have any conditions that could be caused by a real infection.

In relation to the above testing results, the CHP conducted a site inspection to the doctor's clinic mentioned above with an expert from the University of Hong Kong. It is learned that the doctor performed COVID-19 vaccine injection for 13 clients on January 6, and there is a possibility that the environment was contaminated with the vaccine.

After examining the clinical, epidemiological and laboratory findings, the CHP considered that the case is compatible with vaccine strain contamination and hence will not be classified as a case of SARS-CoV-2 virus infection. Quarantine order of her close contacts will be lifted.