

CHP follows up on cluster of Candida auris carrier cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (June 20) following up on a cluster of Candida auris carrier cases involving a total of three residents from a residential care home for the elderly (RCHE) in Kwai Chung, and reminded members of the public about the proper use of antimicrobials and maintaining personal hygiene against infection.

The CHP received notification from the Hospital Authority on June 6 that a 73-year-old female resident of the aforementioned RCHE, who was earlier admitted to Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH), was confirmed to have carried Candida auris upon testing. She is now in stable condition and has been discharged.

Upon receiving the notification, the CHP conducted a follow-up epidemiological investigation of the RCHE. It was found that an 86-year-old female resident, who had multiple admissions to PMH from June 2021 to June this year, was confirmed earlier to have carried Candida auris upon testing. Contact tracing and screening for contacts further revealed that another 87-year-old female resident is also a carrier case. Both of them are in stable condition.

The three residents, with underlying illnesses, have no symptoms of infection. The CHP is now investigating the infection source of the cluster. The possibility of transmission in the RCHE is not ruled out.

The CHP has provided infection control advice and staff training to staff of the RCHE. The RCHE is advised to follow the prevailing guidelines to enhance infection control measures including specific placement of carrier residents, strict observation of infection control precautions, enhancement of environmental cleansing and disinfection, use of dedicated medical equipment, toilet and bathing facilities to prevent the spread of Candida auris. The CHP will keep in close liaison with the RCHE concerned and monitor the situation of the residents, and ensure the RCHE has carried out the various infection control measures.

A spokesman for the CHP explained that Candida is a fungus commonly found in the natural environment, particularly in moist and warm environments. In humans, it is commonly found in body sites such as the oral cavity, the digestive tract, skin and the vagina. It is a common fungus living on or in the human body but can occasionally cause infections, especially in individuals with impaired immunity.

Among the different candida species, Candida auris is more drug-resistant. Infections vary from being mild to potentially life-threatening or fatal, depending on which part of the body is affected and the general health condition of the patient. The spokesman stressed that proper use of

antimicrobials and maintaining personal hygiene, especially hand hygiene, are crucial to the prevention of emergence and cross-transmission of *Candida auris*.