

## CHP follows up on cluster of Candida auris carrier cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (February 9) following up three new Candida auris carrier cases at 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 that a 97-year-old male resident of the aforementioned RCHE, who was earlier admitted to Princess Margaret Hospital, was confirmed on February 3 to have carried Candida auris upon testing. He is now in stable condition and has been discharged. Upon receiving the notification, the CHP conducted contact tracing and screening at the RCHE and found another two carrier cases involving two male residents, aged 88 and 97, who are now in stable condition. All three residents, with underlying illnesses, have no symptoms of infection.

The CHP announced a cluster of Candida auris carrier cases in June last year involving three residents at that RCHE. Except for the 86-year-old female resident who has passed away, the other two female residents, aged 74 and 88, are still living in the RCHE. Together with these two earlier cases, there are currently five Candida auris carrier cases at the RCHE.

The CHP is continuing its investigation on the infection source of the cluster and a site inspection has been conducted. It is found that the RCHE has yet to fully implement relevant infection control measures and thus the possibility of transmission in the RCHE is not ruled out.

The CHP has provided infection control advice and training to staff of the RCHE. The RCHE is advised to follow the prevailing guidelines to enhance infection control measures including appropriate placement of carrier residents, strict implementation of contact 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, the 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 the emergence and cross-transmission of *Candida auris*.