

CHP follows up on cluster of Candida auris carrier cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (September 17) following up on a cluster of Candida auris carrier cases involving a total of four residents at a residential care home for the elderly (RCHE) in Mong Kok, 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 72-year-old male resident of the aforementioned RCHE, who was earlier admitted to Kwong Wah Hospital and discharged back to the RCHE, was confirmed on September 2 to have carried Candida auris upon testing.

Upon receiving the notification, the CHP conducted contact tracing and screening and epidemiological investigations at the RCHE, and found three other carrier cases involving two male residents aged 66 and 75 and a female resident aged 83. The four of them, with underlying illnesses, have no symptoms of infection, and are in stable condition.

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 first case (72-year-old male resident) was discharged without knowing the carrier status and cannot rule out the possibility of infection spread within the RCHE before appropriate infection control measures were implemented.

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, 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*.