

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

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (October 8) 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 To Kwa Wan, 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 an 82-year-old male resident of the aforementioned RCHE was confirmed to be carrying *Candida auris* upon admission screening. Upon receiving the notification, the CHP conducted contact tracing and screening at the RCHE and found three other carrier cases involving two female residents aged 65 and 88, and a male resident aged 95. The four of them, with underlying illnesses, have no symptoms of infection, and are in stable condition.

The CHP's epidemiological investigation found that five other male residents, aged between 58 and 82 residing at the RCHE, who had previously acquired the infection during hospitalisation and had been identified as carrier cases, should be the possible source of infection. The CHP has conducted a site inspection at the RCHE and found that the RCHE had yet to fully implement relevant infection control measures, which caused the transmission in the RCHE.

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 cleaning 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 that 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.