

CHP follows up on cluster of Candida auris carrier cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (May 25) following up on a cluster of *Candida auris* carrier cases involving a total of four residents from a residential care home for the elderly (RCHE) in Tsuen 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 on May 9, 22, and 24 respectively that three residents (one male and two females) of that RCHE, who were admitted to Princess Margaret Hospital or Yan Chai Hospital (YCH), were confirmed to have carried *Candida auris* upon testing. The trio with underlying illnesses, aged between 73 and 93, have no symptoms of infection. Two of them have been discharged.

Upon receiving the notification, the CHP conducted follow-up epidemiological investigation against the RCHE including carrying out contact tracing and screening for contacts. It was found that a 78-year-old male resident, who had multiple admissions to YCH from November last year to January this year, has earlier been confirmed to have carried *Candida auris* upon testing. He is now in a stable condition and was discharged. The CHP is now investigating the infection source of the cluster and carrying out contact tracing and screening. 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*.