

CHP follows up on two clusters of Candida auris carrier cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (March 22) following up on two clusters of *Candida auris* carrier cases involving a total of nine residents from two residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs), and reminded members of the public about the proper use of antimicrobials and maintaining personal hygiene against infection.

The first cluster involved three residents of an RCHE in Sha Tin. The first two cases were a 93-year-old male and a 91-year-old male. They had been admitted to Prince of Wales Hospital and Shatin Hospital earlier, and were related to cluster of *Candida auris* cases in the hospitals. Contact tracings and screenings conducted at the RCHE found another carrier case involving an 83-year-old male. The CHP believed that he was infected in the RCHE. The three residents with underlying illnesses have no symptoms of infection, and are in stable condition.

The second cluster involved an RCHE in Sham Shui Po with a total of six cases. The first case was a 73-year-old male resident, who was confirmed to have carried *Candida auris* during his stay at the Caritas Medical Centre. He returned to the RCHE after discharged. Upon the CHP's contact tracing and screening at the RCHE, two male and three female residents were also found to be carrier cases. They are aged between 65 and 92. All of the six residents with underlying illness have no symptoms of infection and are in stable condition.

The CHP is continuing its investigation on the infection source of the two clusters, and a site inspection has been conducted. The RCHE concerned in Sham Shui Po has been identified by the CHP as having a cluster of *Candida auris* carrier cases in April last year.

The CHP has provided infection control advice and training to staff of the RCHE again. The RCHE is advised to follow the prevailing guidelines to enhance infection control measures including the 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 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.

â€œAmong 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.