

CHP investigates 17 additional cases tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 virus and eight additional Omicron cases and provides information on case category

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 0.00am, January 1, the CHP was investigating 17 additional cases tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 virus confirmed by the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch (PHLSB), taking the number of cases to 12 667 in Hong Kong so far.

The newly reported cases consist of 16 imported cases and one possibly import-related case. Among them, 12 were asymptomatic infection. Fifteen of the cases involved mutant strains; mutation test result of one case is pending; while the viral load of the remaining one case is insufficient for mutation test. The patients comprise four males and 13 females, aged 20 to 54. Among the imported cases, three of them arrived in Hong Kong from Group A specified places (high-risk) with enhanced surveillance and 13 from Group A specified places (high-risk), ten patients tested positive during the "test-and-hold" arrangement upon arrival at the Temporary Specimen Collection Centre (TSCC) at Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) and six tested positive during quarantine. The possibly import-related case (case 12656) is an airport ground crew staff member working at HKIA whose specimen collected on December 30 in a mobile specimen collection station tested positive. The CHP has announced the case details yesterday (December 31) (www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202112/31/P2021123100709.htm).

As the CHP has recorded increasing number of asymptomatic and re-positive cases, with effect from today, the CHP will further differentiate the cases which were tested positive into three categories: confirmed, asymptomatic and re-positive in the daily press release and at the CHP website.

A total of 136 cases tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 virus have been reported in the past 14 days (December 18 to 31). Three of them are import-related cases, while the rest are imported cases.

Meanwhile, the whole genome sequencing analysis of cases announced earlier conducted by the PHLSB confirmed that cases 12606, 12608, 12613, 12614, 12615, 12637, 12649 and 12654 all carried the Variant of Concern Omicron. These cases involve eight males aged 16 to 76 years old. Four of them tested positive during the "test-and-hold" arrangement upon arrival at the TSCC; three tested positive during quarantine; and one tested positive during medical consultation at a public hospital.

Together with the aforementioned cases, there are so far 95 cases

involving Omicron in Hong Kong.

Separately, among the 44 environmental samples taken by the CHP earlier during a field inspection to the restaurant (Moon Palace at Festival Walk) where cases 12611, 12637 and 12654 had patronised at about the same period, none of them tested positive. Moreover, the whole genome sequencing analysis conducted by the PHLSB confirmed that cases 12609, 12611, 12637 and 12654 have identical genetic sequences.

According to the testing and quarantine arrangements for local cases with mutant strains, the CHP reminded that persons who resided or worked within the same building as the residence of relevant cases will be subject to compulsory testing on specified dates in accordance with the announcement by the DH. They will also be required to undergo self-monitoring until the 21st day (see the details of the buildings and dates of testing at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/CTN_Specified_premises_and_Dates_of_Testing.pdf).

Specified persons in relation to the following specified premises are also reminded to undergo compulsory testing in accordance with the CTN tomorrow (January 2):

- Wing Chak House, Chak On Estate, Chak On Road, Shek Kip Mei
- Block A, Hoi Tao Building, Belcher's Street, Kennedy Town
- Block 2, Grandeur Terrace, Tin Shui Road, Tin Shui Wai

The CHP's epidemiological investigations and relevant contact tracing on the reported cases are ongoing. For case details and contact tracing information, please see the Annex or the "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk).

The spokesman for the CHP stressed, "The global situation of COVID-19 infection remains severe and there is a continuous increase in the number of cases involving mutant strains that carry higher transmissibility, and there are also reports of breakthrough infections in some vaccinated individuals. The CHP strongly urges members of the public to avoid all non-essential travel outside Hong Kong, in particular to specified places with high risk under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H)."