

CHP investigates 25 additional confirmed cases of COVID-19 and provides investigation update on case 12557

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 0.00am, December 25, the CHP was investigating 25 additional confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), taking the number of cases to 12 581 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 12 580 confirmed cases and one probable case).

The newly reported cases are imported cases. Fourteen of the cases involved mutant strains; mutation test results of nine cases are pending; while the viral load of the remaining two cases is insufficient for mutation tests. The patients comprise 14 males and 11 females, aged 21 to 80. Eleven of them arrived in Hong Kong from a Group A specified place (high-risk) with enhanced surveillance and 14 from Group A specified places (high-risk). Twenty 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 five tested positive during quarantine.

Among the above-mentioned cases, four cases had stayed in Hong Kong during the incubation period. Case 12568 involves a 28-year-old male patient who is a Hong Kong karate athlete. He lives at a village house in Ho Pui Tsuen, Pat Heung, Yuen Long. He departed Hong Kong on December 9 for Kazakhstan via Qatar, after he tested negative on the same day. He arrived in Hong Kong on December 23 from Korea by flight KE607 and his specimen collected upon arrival in the TSCC tested positive. He developed symptoms on December 23. His Ct value is less than 30 and his specimen carried the N501Y and T478K mutant strain.

Case 12569 involves a 33-year-old male patient who is also a Hong Kong karate athlete. He is reported to have stayed in Hong Kong Sports Institute, 25 Yuen Wo Road, Sha Tin, during the incubation period. He departed Hong Kong on December 12 for Kazakhstan via Qatar, after he tested negative on the same day. He arrived in Hong Kong on December 23 from Korea by flight KE607 and his specimen collected upon arrival in the TSCC tested positive. He developed symptoms on December 23. His Ct value is less than 30 and his specimen carried the N501Y and T478K mutant strain.

Case 12579 involves a 79-year-old female patient living at Tower 2, Wing Fai Centre, Fanling. She departed Hong Kong on December 9 for the United Kingdom (UK), after she tested negative on December 7. She arrived in Hong Kong on December 24 from the UK by flight CX252 and her specimen collected upon arrival in the TSCC tested positive. She was asymptomatic and with a Ct value over 30 and her mutation test result is pending.

Case 12586 involves a 28-year-old female patient who is a local air crew member living at a village house in Tai Mei Tuk Village, Tai Po. She departed Hong Kong on December 22 for Australia, after she tested negative for COVID-19 on December 20. She arrived in Hong Kong on December 24 from Australia by flight CX138 and her specimen collected upon arrival in the TSCC tested positive. She was asymptomatic and with a Ct value over 30 and her specimen carried the N501Y and T478K mutant strain.

As a prudent measure, the places where the above four cases resided or visited in Hong Kong during the incubation periods have been included in a compulsory testing notice (CTN). Specified persons who were present at the relevant venues at specified periods need to undergo compulsory testing on the specified date.

A total of 73 cases have been reported in the past 14 days (December 11 to 24). One of them is an import-related case, while the rest are imported cases.

Meanwhile, the whole genome sequencing analysis of cases announced earlier conducted by the DH's Public Health Laboratory Services Branch (PHLSB) confirmed that cases 12555, 12556 and 12557 all carried the Variant of Concern Omicron. Case 12555 involves a 27-year-old female who tested positive during quarantine and case 12556 involves a 36-year-old male who tested positive during the "test-and-hold" arrangement upon arrival at the TSCC.

For case 12557, it involves a 64-year-old male who is a cleaner at a designated toilet solely for use by preliminary positive imported cases confined at a designated area at the Midfield Concourse of HKIA while waiting for transfer to hospital. After comparing his genetic sequencing, it was confirmed by the PHLSB that the genomes of the case were identical to the genomes of an imported case earlier (case 12542) and were highly similar to the genomes of recent imported cases involving Omicron. Case 12542 arrived at Hong Kong on December 19 from Ghana and Qatar and tested positive during the "test-and-hold" arrangement at HKIA. The CHP considered that case 12557 acquired infection from coming into contact with imported case involving Omicron during his work inside the toilet. As such, the CHP has classified case 12557 as an import-related case.

Together with the aforementioned cases, there are so far 44 cases involving Omicron in Hong Kong.

Separately, the CHP is investigating a case of COVID-19 confirmed in Shanghai involving a 23-year-old female patient who lives at East Wing, 5/F, Jockey Club Global Graduate Tower, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. She travelled to Shanghai on December 5 by flight MU508 and she tested positive there on December 23. According to information provided by the patient, she developed symptoms on December 22. She received one dose of COVID-19 vaccination (Sinopharm) in the Mainland on April 28 and another dose of COVID-19 vaccination (CoronaVac) in the Mainland on June 10. The places

where the patient resided and visited in Hong Kong during the incubation period have been included in a CTN.

Also, the DH invoked the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H) to prohibit the landing of passenger flights in Hong Kong from the relevant original port of the following airlines for 14 days:

– Passenger flight (EK384) operated by Emirates arriving from Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, and Bangkok, Thailand, to Hong Kong on December 23 had two passengers confirmed to have COVID-19 by arrival testing, and one passenger failed to comply with the requirements specified under the Cap. 599H (landing of passenger flights from Dubai and Bangkok in Hong Kong from December 25 to January 7, 2022 prohibited);

– Passenger flight (KE607) operated by Korean Air arriving in Hong Kong from Seoul, Korea, on December 23 had five passengers confirmed to have COVID-19 by arrival testing (landing of passenger flights from Seoul in Hong Kong from December 26 to January 8, 2022 prohibited); and

– Passenger flight (CX252) operated by Cathay Pacific arriving in Hong Kong from London, the UK, on December 24, had seven passengers confirmed to have COVID-19 by arrival testing (landing of passenger flights from London in Hong Kong from December 26 to January 8, 2022 prohibited).

According to the testing and quarantine arrangements for local COVID-19 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 (December 26):

- Block 1, Rambler Crest, 1 Tsing Yi Road, Tsing Yi
- On Hei House, Siu Hei Court, 201 Wu Chui Road, Tuen Mun

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

â€‹â€‹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)."