

CHP investigates additional SARS-CoV-2 virus cases by nucleic acid tests and rapid antigen tests as well as one imported case involving Omicron mutant strain sub-lineage BA.5 (with photo)

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (April 14) announced the latest epidemic situation of COVID-19. As of 0.00am, April 14, the CHP was investigating 579 additional cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus by nucleic acid tests (39 confirmed cases, 76 asymptomatic cases and 464 cases with pending case status) in the past 24 hours. Separately, 464 additional positive cases through rapid antigen tests (RAT) (235 symptomatic cases and 229 asymptomatic cases) were reported. Hong Kong has recorded a total of 753 868 and 441 470 cases that tested positive by nucleic acid tests and RATs respectively for the SARS-CoV-2 virus so far.

The aforementioned newly reported cases consist of 23 imported cases and all of them are cases tested positive by nucleic acid tests. The CHP is continuing with epidemiological investigations on the cases. Please refer to the "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk) for more information.

Meanwhile, whole genome sequencing analysis by the DH's Public Health Laboratory Services Branch confirmed that an imported case recorded earlier carried the newly emerged sub-lineage BA.5 under the Omicron mutant strain. The case involves a 24-year-old male arrived from Ethiopia via Thailand on April 6 by flight ET608. He tested negative on arrival and tested positive by nucleic acid test on April 8 during his compulsory quarantine at a designated quarantine hotel. He developed cough, fever and headache on April 9 and was transferred to a community isolation facility hotel. He had received two doses of COVID-19 vaccines (Janssen) in South Africa. Epidemiological investigation of the case is ongoing. The sub-lineage BA.5 was first found in South Africa, and has been detected in a number of places including Botswana, Denmark, Germany and United Kingdom. Scientific information on the public health significance about this sub-lineage is lacking at the moment. The World Health Organization is working on to further assess its characteristics, including increased transmissibility, reduction in vaccine effectiveness and increased risk for reinfections. The CHP will closely monitor the latest developments.

In addition, as of 0.00am, April 14, a total of 8 789 death cases that have tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus during the fifth wave (since December 31, 2021) were recorded, with 8 730 and 56 deaths reported from the Hospital Authority and public mortuaries respectively as well as three deaths reported from the Chinese University of Hong Kong Medical Centre. Hong Kong has so far recorded a total of 9 002 death cases that have tested positive

for the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Furthermore, among the earlier cases by nucleic acid tests reported, there were cases (including pending cases) changed to confirmed, asymptomatic or re-positive cases. As at yesterday (April 13), the total number of confirmed cases was 308 808, while the figures for asymptomatic cases, re-positive cases and pending/unknown cases recorded since January 1 were 184 273, 10 and 260 198 respectively.

As a passenger flight (SQ894) operated by Singapore Airlines arriving in Hong Kong from Singapore on April 13 had four passengers who tested positive upon arrival, and a passenger flight (ET608) operated by Ethiopian Airlines from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and Bangkok, Thailand, arriving in Hong Kong on the same day had five passengers who tested positive upon arrival, the DH thus 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 Singapore operated by Singapore Airlines, as well as from Addis Ababa and Bangkok operated by Ethiopian Airlines from April 15 to 21.

The spokesman for the CHP stressed that the local situation of COVID-19 infection is still severe, the CHP strongly appeals to the community to continue to comply with the social distancing measures, avoid going out and refrain from participating in unnecessary or crowded activities or gatherings (particularly religious or cross-family activities and gatherings). This would lower the risk of infection and prevent the virus from spreading in the community.

â€‹The spokesman reminded that COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective in preventing severe cases and deaths from the SARS-CoV-2 virus. They can provide effective protection to those vaccinated in preventing serious complications and even death after infection. People who have yet to receive vaccination, especially senior citizens, chronic patients and other immunocompromised persons who face a higher chance of death after COVID-19 infection, should get vaccinated as early as possible for self-protection and to reduce the risk of falling seriously ill and death should they get infected. Meanwhile, a person who gets COVID-19 and influenza at the same time may be more seriously ill and would have a higher risk of death. Influenza vaccination may reduce the likelihood of hospitalisation and the length of stay. In addition, seasonal influenza vaccination is recommended for all persons aged 6 months or above except those with known contraindications. Persons at higher risk of getting influenza and its complications, including the elderly and children, should receive seasonal influenza vaccination early. Please see details of the vaccination schemes on the CHP's website (www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/17980.html).

