

CHP investigates case of B virus human infection

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) is today (April 3) investigating a case of human infection of B virus (also known as herpes simiae virus), and urged the public to refrain from touching or feeding wild monkeys to minimise the risk of contracting the virus.

The case involves a 37-year-old male with good past health, who was admitted to Yan Chai Hospital through accident and emergency department on March 21 due to fever and decreased conscious level. He is now receiving treatment at the Intensive Care Unit of the hospital and his condition is critical. Cerebrospinal fluid specimen of the patient tested positive for B virus by the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch of the CHP today.

According to the information provided by his family members and preliminary investigations, the patient had contacts with wild monkeys and was wounded by them during his visit to Kam Shan Country Park in late February. Epidemiological investigations are ongoing.

A spokesman for the CHP said that this is the first B virus human infection case recorded by the CHP, but these cases had been reported in other places such as the United States, Canada, the Mainland and Japan, and were mainly caused by bites or scratches by monkeys while human-to-human transmissions are very rare. Members of the public are strongly urged to refrain from touching or feeding wild monkeys.

The spokesman supplemented that B virus is naturally carried in the saliva, urine and stool of macaques, which is a type of wild monkeys commonly found in Hong Kong. Infected persons may initially present with flu-like symptoms that may progress to infection of the central nervous system.

To minimise risk of acquiring B virus, members of the public are advised to note the following:

1. Stay away from wild monkeys and avoid touching or feeding them;
2. In case there are wounds caused by monkeys, wash the wound with running water and seek medical attention immediately.

Members of the public may also visit website of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department for more information on do's and don'ts when encountering monkeys:

www.afcd.gov.hk/english/conservation/con_fau/con_fau_nui/con_fau_nui_str/con_fau_nui_str.html.