

CHP investigates case of Legionnaires' disease in hospital

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (December 13) announced the further investigation results of a Legionnaires' disease (LD) case reported by the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) Medical Centre on November 15. The case is suspected to be a possible nosocomial infection at this stage.

The 71-year-old male patient was admitted to the CUHK Medical Centre from October 14 to November 4. He was hospitalised again on November 12 due to fever, diarrhoea, and shortness of breath. His condition deteriorated and he eventually succumbed on November 19.

As the patient had stayed at the hospital for over three weeks prior to the onset of symptoms, the CHP had by that time immediately advised the hospital to suspend the water supply system of the concerned cubicle and conduct disinfection, and had collected samples at the hospital with the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department on November 16. Upon laboratory testing by the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch (PHLSB) of the CHP, eight out of 12 water samples tested positive for *Legionella pneumophila* serogroup 1 antigen (Lp1), with levels from 0.4 to 60.7 colony-forming units per millilitre (cfu/ml). One out of four environmental swabs tested positive. Genetic sequence revealed that the sample of the patient has the same sequence type as the water sample.

The case is suspected to be a possible nosocomial infection at this stage taking into account of the length of staying at the hospital of the patient, onset date and environmental test results.

The CHP has provided health and medical surveillance advice to the CUHK Medical Centre. The CHP also requested the hospital to trace patients who have been admitted to the concerned ward and cubicle during October 14 to November 16. For those who have stayed at the CUHK Medical Centre during that period of time, if present with pneumonia symptoms, they should seek medical attention as soon as possible and alert doctors the relevant situation. The CHP will maintain close liaison with CUHK Medical Centre to continue its close monitor of the implementation of the measures and epidemiological investigations.

A spokesman for the CHP said that, "Legionellae are found in various environmental settings and grow well in warm water (20 to 45 degrees Celsius). They can be found in aqueous environments such as water tanks, hot and cold water systems, cooling towers, whirlpools and spas, water fountains and home apparatus that support breathing. People may become infected when they breathe in contaminated droplets (aerosols) and mist generated by artificial water systems, or when handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes."

â€‹The public may visit the CHP's [LD page](#), the [Code of Practice for Prevention of LD](#) and the [Housekeeping Guidelines for Cold and Hot Water Systems for Building Management](#) of the Prevention of LD Committee, and the CHP's [risk-based strategy](#) for prevention and control of LD.