

CHP investigates fatal case of Streptococcus suis infection

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (October 28) investigating a fatal case of infection by Streptococcus suis. Streptococcus suis infection is a common disease among pigs while humans can be infected through direct contact with and exposure to infected pigs or other animals, uncooked pork and other pig products.

The male patient, aged 66 and with underlying illness, presented with fever, abdominal pain, vomiting and diarrhoea since October 17. He attended the Accident and Emergency Department of Kwong Wah Hospital (KWH) on October 18 and was directly admitted to the Intensive Care Unit of the hospital. The patient passed away on October 27.

His blood culture grew Streptococcus suis upon laboratory testing by KWH.

Initial enquiries revealed that the patient had a history of handling raw pig organs during the incubation period. He had no recent travel history and his home contact has remained asymptomatic.

A spokesman for the CHP explained that Streptococcus suis infection may present as meningitis, and less commonly sepsis, endocarditis, arthritis, bronchopneumonia and toxic shock syndrome. Streptococcus suis infection can be treated with appropriate antibiotics.

To prevent Streptococcus suis infection, members of the public are advised to always practise personal and environmental hygiene. They should avoid contact with pigs that are sick or dead from disease and their excreta or body fluid. If contact with pigs or raw pork is necessary, one should:

- * Use protective gloves;
- * Wash hands after handling pigs or raw pork; and
- * Disinfect and cover wounds properly.

Members of the public who suspect they may be infected should consult their doctors as soon as possible and report their relevant exposure histories. They may visit the CHP's website (www.chp.gov.hk/en/healthtopics/content/24/3648.html) for more information on Streptococcus suis.