

## CHP investigates five additional confirmed cases of COVID-19 and one additional Omicron case

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 0.00am, December 14, the CHP was investigating five additional confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), taking the number of cases to 12 496 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 12 495 confirmed cases and one probable case).

The newly reported cases are imported cases which involved mutant strains. The patients comprise two males and three females, aged 21 to 55. All of them arrived in Hong Kong from a Group A specified place (high-risk). Four patients tested positive during the "test-and-hold" arrangement upon arrival at the Temporary Specimen Collection Centre (TSCC) at Hong Kong International Airport and the remaining one tested positive under the compulsory testing requirement.

Among the above-mentioned cases, case 12497 involves a 34-year-old female patient who is a foreign domestic helper. She arrived in Hong Kong on November 17 from the Philippines by flight 5J272. The specimen collected upon arrival in the TSCC tested negative for COVID-19. The results of the six tests conducted during the compulsory quarantine period at the designated quarantine facility (Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre) were all negative. Upon completion of the compulsory quarantine on December 8, she stayed at Winland 800 Hotel in Tsing Yi. The patient is asymptomatic. She received one dose of COVID-19 vaccination (Janssen) on July 29 in the Philippines.

She underwent a test at a community testing centre on December 12 under the compulsory testing requirement and the test result was preliminarily positive but with low viral load (Ct value larger than 30). Her specimen carried the N501Y mutant strain. Preliminary testing results show that the case has a high chance of carrying the Alpha variant strain. The whole genome sequencing conducted by the DH's Public Health Laboratory Services Branch is continuing, to exclude the possibility of carrying the Omicron variant strain. The patient tested negative upon admission to hospital, while her antibody test was positive. Based on the epidemiological and laboratory findings so far, the case is compatible with a re-positive case. As a prudent measure, the places where she resided and visited in Hong Kong during the incubation period have been included in a compulsory testing notice. Specified persons who were present at the relevant venues at specified periods need to undergo compulsory testing on or before December 15.

A total of 60 cases have been reported in the past 14 days (November 30 to December 13) and all of them are imported cases.

Meanwhile, the CHP provided an update on the latest investigations on an imported case announced yesterday (case 12495), involving a 50-year-old male

patient who arrived in Hong Kong from Tanzania, South Africa and Kenya by flight QR818 via Qatar on December 10 and tested positive during the seven-day compulsory quarantine at the designated quarantine facility (Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre) according to the requirement for inbound travellers from a Group A specified place with enhanced surveillance. He had received two doses of COVID-19 vaccination (Comirnaty) in Hong Kong on April 16 and May 7. He developed symptoms on December 12. The Ct value for the test after admission on December 12 is less than 20 and he tested positive for antibodies. The whole genome sequencing conducted by the DH's Public Health Laboratory Services Branch confirmed that the case carried the Variant of Concern Omicron. There are so far eight cases involving Omicron in Hong Kong. Apart from the aforementioned cases, two cases are related to South Africa (cases 12388 and 12404), two cases are related to Nigeria (cases 12432 and 12433), two cases are related to the United Kingdom (cases 12490 and 12491) and one case is related to the United States (case 12478).

A spokesman for the CHP said that, as the eight cases involving Omicron were all detected at the Hong Kong International Airport restricted area, at a designated quarantine facility or at a designated quarantine hotel, there has not been any spread in the community. The CHP will adopt the most stringent prevention and control measures to prevent the mutant strain from entering the local community.

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](http://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)."