

CHP investigates local case tested preliminarily positive for SARS-CoV-2 virus involving mutant strains at Tsui Ning Garden in Tuen Mun

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (January 4) said that it is investigating a local case tested preliminarily positive for SARS-CoV-2 virus involving mutant strains and is tracing the possible source of infection.

The case involves a 42-year-old male patient living at Block 2, Tsui Ning Garden, Tuen Mun. He developed fever and headache on January 2 and consulted a private doctor on January 3. His specimen submitted on the same day tested preliminarily positive carrying N501Y and T478K mutant strains. His CT value is around 18 after hospital admission. The CHP suspects at this stage that the patient carries the Omicron variant, but whole genome sequencing still needs to be conducted to confirm whether the patient carries the Omicron variant. He worked at Unit A, 13/F, Lee & Man Commercial Center, 169 Electric Road, North Point, where he last went to work on December 31. The patient has not received COVID-19 vaccination.

Initial investigation revealed that he has no recent travel history and has not visited Moon Palace or the shopping mall (Festival Walk) where cases tested positive appeared. The CHP has so far not found any close contacts between the case and other recent cases tested positive, and is now investigating the places where the patient visited in the past 21 days in order to ascertain the infection source and to terminate the silent transmission chains in the community.

As the patient carries a mutant strain with higher transmissibility and risk of infection, the Government has made a "restriction-testing declaration" tonight for the building where the patient resided in Hong Kong (Block 2, Tsui Ning Garden, Tuen Mun) and persons who resided or worked at the building will be subject to increased compulsory testing frequency. The places where he had visited in Hong Kong during the incubation period will also be included in a compulsory testing notice. Specified persons who were present at the relevant venues at specified periods need to undergo compulsory testing on the specified date.

The CHP is arranging for the close contacts of the case to undergo quarantine at a quarantine centre for 21 days. Epidemiological investigation and contact tracing of the case will continue.

The spokesman for the CHP said, "The Government has remained vigilant and has been closely monitoring the latest scientific data on mutant strains as well as the epidemic situation of various places. The most stringent anti-epidemic measures will be implemented to prevent the mutant strains from

spreading in the local community."

At the moment, the adverse impact on the epidemic situation caused by the newly emerged mutant strains is not fully known yet, but vaccination is still essential to prevent severe cases and deaths from COVID-19 infection. The Government has launched the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme. Members of the public are encouraged to get vaccinated. Details of the programme can be found at the designated website (www.covidvaccine.gov.hk). The CHP also urges all individuals who are in doubt about their own health condition, or individuals with exposure to infection risk, to undergo testing promptly for early identification of infected persons.