

CHP investigates seven additional confirmed cases of COVID-19 and five additional Omicron cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 0.00am, December 20, the CHP was investigating seven additional confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), taking the number of cases to 12 534 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 12 533 confirmed cases and one probable case).

The newly reported cases are imported cases. Six of the cases involved mutant strains while the viral load of the remaining case is insufficient for mutation tests. The patients comprise five males and two females, aged 18 to 78. Three of them arrived in Hong Kong from a Group A specified place (high-risk) with enhanced surveillance and the other four arrived in Hong Kong from Group A specified places (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 (HKIA), two tested positive during quarantine and one tested positive in a test during her wait for transfer at the restricted area at HKIA.

Among the above-mentioned cases, case 12535 involves a 22-year-old male patient, who lives at Block 1, Rambler Crest, 1 Tsing Yi Road, Tsing Yi. He departed Hong Kong on December 7 for Poland after he tested negative for COVID-19 on the same day. He arrived in Hong Kong on December 18 from Poland and Germany by flight QR818 via Qatar and his specimen collected upon arrival in the TSCC tested positive for COVID-19. The patient is asymptomatic and with a Ct value over 30. His specimen carried the N501Y mutant strain. As a prudent measure, the places where he resided and visited in Hong Kong during the incubation periods 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 21.

A total of 65 cases have been reported in the past 14 days (December 6 to 19) and all of them are imported cases.

Meanwhile, the CHP provided an update on the latest investigations on five imported cases announced on December 18 and December 19 (cases 12522, 12523, 12524, 12526 and 12527), involving four females and one male aged between 26 and 77. The whole genome sequencing analysis conducted by the DH's Public Health Laboratory Services Branch confirmed that the five cases all carried the Variant of Concern Omicron. Two of them tested positive during the "test-and-hold" arrangement upon arrival at the TSCC and three of them tested positive during quarantine.

Together with the five aforementioned cases, there are so far 19 cases involving Omicron in Hong Kong.

Also, as a passenger flight (CX845) operated by Cathay Pacific arriving in Hong Kong from New York, the United States, on December 19 had three passengers confirmed to have COVID-19 by arrival testing, the DH thus invoked the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H) to prohibit the landing of passenger flights from New York operated by Cathay Pacific in Hong Kong from December 20 to January 2.

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).

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)."