

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

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 0.00am, December 17, the CHP was investigating seven additional confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), taking the number of cases to 12 514 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 12 513 confirmed cases and one probable case).

The newly reported cases are imported cases. Six of the cases involved mutant strains while the mutation test result of the remaining case is pending. The patients comprise five males and two females, aged 2 to 41. All of them 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 and one tested positive during quarantine at a designated quarantine hotel. Case 12519 is a close contact of an imported case confirmed previously (case 12502) and tested positive at the Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre.

Among the above-mentioned cases, 12517 involves a 41-year-old male patient who is a cargo crew member. He arrived in Hong Kong from Kenya, the United Arab Emirates, India and Uganda by flight ACP502 via the United Arab Emirates on December 15 and tested positive during the "test-and-hold" arrangement upon arrival at the TSCC. He had received two doses of COVID-19 vaccination (AstraZeneca) in Kenya on April 14 and July 16. He was asymptomatic. The Ct value for the test after admission on December 15 is over 30 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. According to the information from the patient, he had been diagnosed with COVID-19 in Kenya in July 2020. After examining the epidemiological and laboratory findings, this case is compatible with another infection of COVID-19.

The CHP also provided an update on the latest investigations on an imported case announced yesterday (case 12512), involving a 27-year-old male patient who is a cargo crew member. He is a co-worker of 12517 and they arrived in Hong Kong together from Kenya, the United Arab Emirates, India and Uganda by flight ACP502 via the United Arab Emirates on December 15. He tested positive during the "test-and-hold" arrangement upon arrival at the TSCC. He had received two doses of COVID-19 vaccination (Moderna) in Kenya on September 1 and September 30. He developed symptoms on December 15. The Ct value for the test after admission on December 15 is over 30 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 11 cases involving Omicron in Hong Kong (cases 12388,

12404, 12432, 12433, 12478, 12490, 12491, 12495, 12498, 12512 and 12517).

Meanwhile, the CHP is actively following up with case 12513, involving a local cargo crew member. He underwent medical surveillance and regular compulsory testing in accordance with the relevant requirements for exempted persons and tested positive on December 15. The CHP has announced the case's details last night (December 16)

(www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202112/16/P2021121600619.htm). As the patient may carry the Omicron variant, the CHP will adopt the most stringent prevention and control measures. The compulsory testing frequency will be increased for persons who resided or worked at the same building as the residence of the case (Cheung Hing Building, Yau Ma Tei). The relevant persons will be subject to compulsory testing on days 2, 3, 4, 7, 12 and 19 following the announcement of the relevant confirmed case by the DH. They will also be required to undergo self-monitoring until the 21st day (see the details of the dates of testing at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/CTN_Specified_premises_and_Dates_of_Testing.pdf). Specified persons in relation to the above-mentioned specified premises are also reminded to undergo compulsory testing in accordance with the compulsory testing notice tomorrow (December 18).

A total of 61 cases have been reported in the past 14 days (December 3 to 16) and all of them are imported cases.

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€‹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)."