

## CHP investigates three COVID-19 preliminary positive cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (December 30) said that it is investigating two preliminary positive import-related cases of COVID-19 and a preliminary positive imported case.

The first import-related preliminary positive case involves a 76-year-old male patient living at Wing Chak House, Chak On Estate in Shek Kip Mei. He is a non-household family member of the earlier confirmed imported case 12611 (confirmed to be carrying Omicron mutant strain). His test conducted on December 28 was negative. After case 12611 tested positive, he was sent to the Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre (PBQC) for quarantine on December 28. His specimen collected on December 29 tested preliminarily positive with a Ct value larger than 30 involving N501Y and T478K mutant strains. He remains asymptomatic. He is retired and has no recent travel history. The patient received two doses of COVID-19 vaccination (Comiraty) on July 7 and 28 in Hong Kong. He had lunch with case 12611 and another woman from around 1.30pm to 3pm on December 27 at Moon Palace, Shop G25, Festival Walk, Kowloon Tong. The woman was sent to the PBQC for quarantine on December 28 and her specimen collected on December 29 tested negative.

The second import-related case involves a 34-year-old male patient living in a village house in Tuen Tsz Wai, Lam Tei, Tuen Mun with no recent travel history. He had meal at Moon Palace with three family members from around 2.30pm to 4pm on December 27. He went to a community testing centre for test in accordance with the relevant requirement of the compulsory testing notice (CTN) on December 28 and tested negative. He developed cough on December 29 and attended the Accident and Emergency Department of Tuen Mun Hospital by Light Rail today. His specimen collected tested preliminarily positive with a Ct value of about 30 involving N501Y and T478K mutant strains. The patient received two doses of COVID-19 vaccination (Comiraty) on June 13 and July 4 in Hong Kong. He works at construction sites and last went to work on December 29.

Noting the above cases, the CHP has immediately conducted a field inspection today together with officers from the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department to evaluate the possibility of transmission at Moon Palace and investigate whether the case infections are related in order to stop the potential risk of a further spread of the virus. According to the investigation at this stage, it could not be ruled out that the 76-year-old and 34-year-old male patients were infected by case 12611 during the meal at Moon Palace on December 27. Whole genome sequencing analysis would be needed to ascertain the connection of the three cases. The CHP collected 44 environmental samples during the inspection with the test results pending. The restaurant was requested to be closed for carrying out thorough cleansing and disinfection and improving the air change of the premises.

The Government has earlier exercised power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to require any person who had been present at Moon Palace from 1pm to 3pm on December 27 (including but not limited to visitors and workers), have to undergo testing by December 30. The CHP is also arranging all the staff of the restaurant to conduct compulsory quarantine. The CHP appeals to those who had meals at Moon Palace from 1pm to 3pm on December 27 to call the CHP's hotlines at 2125 1111 or 2125 1122 as soon as possible to facilitate the CHP's epidemiological investigations and contact tracing.

The third preliminary positive case is an imported case involving a 47-year-old male who lives in Block A, Hoi Tao Building, 7-11 Belchers Street, Kennedy Town. He is an aircrew member and departed for the United States (US) on December 22 by flight CX840 after he tested negative for COVID-19 on December 20 before his departure. He is a co-worker of an earlier confirmed imported case 12610 (confirmed to be carrying Omicron mutant strain) and they arrived Hong Kong on December 25 by flight CX843 together from the US. His specimen collected upon arrival in the Temporary Specimen Collection Centre at Hong Kong International Airport tested negative for COVID-19. The patient underwent medical surveillance and regular compulsory testing in accordance with the relevant requirements for exempted persons, during which he tested negative on December 27. After case 12610 tested positive, he was sent to the PBQC for quarantine on December 28 and tested preliminarily positive on December 29 with a Ct value of about 25 involving N501Y mutant strain. He remains asymptomatic. The patient received three doses of COVID-19 vaccination (Comiraty) on March 17, April 7 and December 16 in Hong Kong.

As the aforementioned cases may carry the Omicron mutant strain, the Government has made "restriction-testing declaration" tonight for the buildings where the 76-year-old male patient (lives in Wing Chak House, Chak On Estate in Shek Kip Mei) and the 47-year-old male patient (lives in Block A, Hoi Tao Building, 7-11 Belchers Street, Kennedy Town) resided and persons who resided or worked at the buildings will be subject to increased compulsory testing frequency. The other floors of the village house where the 34-year-old male patient resides will be included in a CTN. The places where the three cases had visited in Hong Kong during the incubation period will also be included in a CTN. Specified persons who were present at the relevant venues at specified periods need to undergo compulsory testing on the specified date. An epidemiological investigation and contact tracing of the cases 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 strain 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](http://www.covidvaccine.gov.hk)).