

CHP provides update on latest situation of invasive Group B Streptococcus cluster outbreak

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (October 28) provided updates on the epidemiological investigations against the cluster outbreak of invasive Group B Streptococcus cases announced earlier, and appealed to members of the public again to refrain from consuming raw freshwater fish and aquatic products, and to handle raw freshwater fish and aquatic products with caution by avoiding contact with wounds.

The number of reported cases from the Hospital Authority (HA) has apparently decreased in recent one week. Since the last update on October 21 by the CHP, four additional cases of invasive Group B Streptococcus have been reported by the HA.

For the 92 patients who had tested positive for invasive Group B Streptococcus, the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch (PHLSB) of the DH has completed laboratory analysis of specimens of 87 patients and confirmed that 49 of them belonged to a cluster outbreak with identical sequence type 283 (ST283).

The 49 cases involved 23 males and 26 females with ages ranging from 31 years to 90 years. They resided in various districts. 32 of the cases had reported a history of handling raw fish and some of them had reported handling with hand wounds. Three of them are kitchen staff of food premises, one is a part-time fishmonger and another is a worker in freshwater fish wholesale market. According to the information from the HA, five out of the 49 cases have died (the cause of death being ascertained) and 22 have been discharged from hospitals.

The PHLSB of the DH is carrying out genetic sequencing of the fish samples obtained earlier from the local freshwater fish wholesale markets to ascertain whether they are related to the cluster outbreak.

A spokesman for the CHP again reminded members of the public that they must not eat any freshwater fish sashimi, raw or undercooked freshwater aquatic products. They must wear gloves when handling aquatic products and avoid direct contact with aquatic products or dirty water with bare hands. When buying or handling aquatic products, the public should avoid touching the fish or wear gloves. They should wash hands with liquid soap and water as soon as possible if having contact with raw aquatic products. If a wound is sustained during handling aquatic products, the wound must be cleaned immediately and properly covered with waterproof adhesive dressings. Individuals should seek medical advice promptly when wound infection is found.