

Cluster of invasive Burkholderia cepacia infection under DH investigation

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (October 10) investigating a cluster of invasive Burkholderia cepacia infection affecting nine persons who had a history of injecting drugs.

The DH received notification from the Hospital Authority of a cluster of patients with invasive Burkholderia cepacia infection yesterday and immediately commenced investigation.

The affected persons involved eight males and one female aged 46 to 69, who were admitted to Caritas Medical Centre from February 2017 to August 2018 respectively for management. Among them, seven were discharged, one remains hospitalised and one passed away in 2017.

The clinical diagnoses of the patients were infective spondylitis (4), sepsis (2), septic arthritis (2) and infective endocarditis (1).

Separately, the Burkholderia cepacia isolates from seven of the nine patients were found to be genetically identical upon laboratory testing.

“Preliminary investigation revealed that all affected patients were people who injected drugs. Investigations are ongoing,” the spokesman for the DH said.

Burkholderia cepacia is a bacteria which are commonly found in water, soil, and moist environments. It is generally not pathogenic to healthy person but those who have weakened immune system or chronic lung diseases may be more susceptible to infection with the bacteria.

The spokesman appealed that people who use drugs should discontinue using drugs or receive methadone treatment instead. If injection of drug is unavoidable, do use disposable needle each and every time, and do not share or re-use needles.