

Expert Committee on Clinical Events Assessment Following COVID-19 Immunisation assessed three suspected serious adverse events following COVID-19 vaccination and DH received another report of suspected serious adverse event following vaccination

The Expert Committee on Clinical Events Assessment Following COVID-19 Immunisation (Expert Committee) convened a meeting today (March 8) to assess suspected serious adverse events following COVID-19 vaccination including one death case and two cases admitted to Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of the public hospitals. The Expert Committee preliminarily considered that the events and the vaccination did not have direct causal association.

Under the established mechanism, upon receipt of reports from the Hospital Authority (HA), the Department of Health (DH) will immediately contact the HA for further information and refer the cases to the Expert Committee for deliberation. The Expert Committee would review the case with all available information, including the medical conditions and history of the patient as well as relevant clinical data, available information related to the vaccine and preliminary autopsy findings (if applicable), and conduct causality assessment based on the algorithm of the World Health Organization (WHO).

For the above three cases assessed in today's meeting, the first case was about a 55-year-old woman who had history of hypertension and hyperlipidaemia, suffered from acute stroke on March 5. She was admitted to Caritas Medical Centre (CMC) for treatment and was later transferred to Kwong Wah Hospital for further treatment. Subsequently, she had cardiac arrest and eventually passed away in the morning on March 6. She had received a dose of CoronaVac COVID-19 vaccine on March 2. Based on the preliminary autopsy findings of aortic dissection, the Expert Committee considered that the deceased's outcome was not directly associated with COVID-19 vaccination. However, the full autopsy report would be required for the Expert Committee to conclude the causality assessment.

The second case was about an 80-year-old man who has history of diabetes, carotid atherosclerosis, hypertension and stroke. He complained of chest pain on March 6 and attended the Accident and Emergency Department of CMC for treatment. The patient did not respond well to treatment and was transferred to the ICU for further management on the same night. The provisional diagnosis was acute coronary syndrome. He received a dose of CoronaVac COVID-19 vaccine on March 1. The Expert Committee considered that

the patient's outcome was not directly associated with COVID-19 vaccination. However, the Expert Committee will require more clinical information during treatment to conclude the causality assessment.

The third case was about a 72-year-old woman who has history of diabetes, hyperlipidaemia, hypertension and hypothyroidism, and received a dose of CoronaVac COVID-19 vaccine on March 6. She felt malaise after vaccination and skipped two doses of regular insulin. Her general condition decreased yesterday (March 7) morning and she was admitted to Prince of Wales Hospital for treatment. She was suspected of having severe diabetic ketoacidosis and transferred to the ICU for further treatment. Provisional diagnosis was diabetes, complicated with hyperosmolar hyperglycemic state. The Expert Committee considered that the patient's situation was due to her underlying diseases and skipping of her regular insulin.

In addition, the DH announced that as of 4pm today, a report of death case was received from the HA in the past 24 hours regarding a suspected serious adverse event following COVID-19 vaccination. According to the information provided by the HA, the case involved a 71-year-old-man with unknown past medical history who was found collapsed at home last night (March 7). He was admitted to the Accident and Emergency Department of the United Christian Hospital for treatment but did not respond to resuscitation and passed away early this morning. He had received COVID-19 vaccination at a private clinic on March 3. The case has been referred to Coroner. The DH has reported the case to the Expert Committee at today's meeting and will obtain further information for the Expert Committee's assessment.

According to the mortality rates in Hong Kong, there were on average 10.2 persons and 8.1 persons passed away every day respectively due to ischemic heart diseases and cerebrovascular diseases in 2019. People with chronic illness should seek medical attention if they feel unwell. They should also adhere to their treatment as prescribed by their doctors.

"Based on available data, there is no particular safety concern detected from the CoronaVac COVID-19 vaccine. According to the product information of the vaccine, patients with uncontrolled severe chronic diseases should not receive the vaccine. Patients with severe chronic illness should use the vaccine with caution; if necessary, delay vaccination after doctor's assessment," a DH spokesperson urged.