

Expert Committee on Clinical Events Assessment Following COVID-19 Immunisation holds first meeting

The Expert Committee on Clinical Events Assessment Following COVID-19 Immunisation held its first meeting today (February 4). The meeting was hosted by the Expert Committee's Co-convenors Professor Ivan Hung and Dr Lee Cheuk-kwong.

At the meeting, members discussed and endorsed the operating procedures of the Expert Committee. Members also deliberated on the risk communication plan, which covers mainly the monitoring, reporting and following up of the clinical events including adverse events following immunisation (AEFIs) and adverse events of special interest (AESIs) during the COVID-19 vaccination programme. The plan will be finalised and endorsed before the commencement of the vaccination programme.

Before the meeting started, the Director of Health, Dr Constance Chan, thanked the expert advisers for accepting the appointment and participating in the safety monitoring of the emergency use of COVID-19 vaccines in Hong Kong. She said the Government will strive for timely identification of and response to serious clinical events following COVID-19 vaccination that may cause public concern, with a view to continuously monitoring the safety of the authorised COVID-19 vaccines for safeguarding public health.

Pursuant to the Prevention and Control of Disease (Use of Vaccines) Regulation, Cap. 599K, the Secretary for Food and Health is required to put in place a mechanism for monitoring any adverse event occurred to the recipients associated with the administration of the COVID-19 vaccines authorised under the Regulation.

Meanwhile, the adverse drug reaction (ADR) reporting system established by the Department of Health (DH) receives local ADR reports including AEFI reports from healthcare professionals and will conduct causality assessment between the vaccine concerned and the clinical event. In addition, the DH has engaged the University of Hong Kong to conduct active surveillance of AEFIs and AESIs following COVID-19 immunisation.

In this connection, the Director of Health appointed the Expert Committee to provide independent assessment of potential causal links between the clinical events and the COVID-19 vaccines used in Hong Kong, reviewing all serious clinical events for expert opinion and advising on immunisation safety-related matters of COVID-19 vaccines.