

Hospital Authority enhances communication on handling of dead bodies

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The ad hoc meeting of the Central Committee on Infectious Diseases and Emergency Response (CCIDER) of the Hospital Authority (HA) today (September 2) discussed the two recent incidents of handling the dead bodies of patients being confirmed of COVID-19 infection after death.

The HA spokesperson said, "Accident & Emergency Department healthcare staff usually need to start resuscitation for critical patients immediately upon their arrival, before a comprehensive consultation and risk assessment can be conducted. Hence, healthcare staff should perform resuscitations in full set of personal protective equipment and appropriate resuscitation rooms."

"CCIDER also agrees that if a patient succumbs despite resuscitation, healthcare staff need to determine the need to test the deceased for COVID-19 based on risk assessment, so as to assist the Centre for Health Protection to conduct epidemiological follow-up actions, including tracing the source of infection and arrange close contacts for quarantine."

Healthcare staff will notify the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) of the test results so that the relevant staff can go to the hospital to pick up the dead body for transfer to public mortuary in accordance with the protective standard specified by the "Precautions for Handling and Disposal of Dead Bodies".

If the test results cannot be available within a short time, the hospital and FEHD will handle the dead bodies as being classified as "category 2", as a precautionary arrangement.

"According to the guidelines, 'category 2' dead bodies must be labelled with yellow tags. When handling the dead body, staff must wear appropriate protective equipment, including gloves, water-resistant gown and surgical masks. Goggles or face shields are needed for eye protection if there may be splashes."

The HA will continue to maintain close liaison with the FEHD regarding the handling of dead bodies to ensure staff safety.