

Hospital Authority enhances support for COVID-19 patients in community

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

To implement the "reducing death, critical cases and infection" anti-epidemic strategy, the Hospital Authority (HA) has launched a series of measures to enhance the support for COVID-19 patients in the community, especially high-risk patients, to prevent disease progression. The HA will strengthen community support for the confirmed patients and implement a triage system to prioritise hospital services for patients in critical condition.

"The HA will try to identify the high-risk patients in the community as early as practicable. These patients include the elderly aged 70 or above, children aged 5 or below, women at 28 or more weeks of pregnancy, and immunocompromised patients such as organ transplant recipients and those with immune system disorders or long-term use of immunosuppressive drugs. Priority for support and treatment will be given to them," the HA spokesperson said.

To prevent deterioration of patient conditions, the above-mentioned high-risk patients can acquire treatment and support through the following means:

1. Booking at HA's designated clinics for medical consultation. If the quota is full, patients can collect drugs as arranged by the clinics to relieve symptoms. COVID-19 oral drugs could be prescribed by designated clinics as appropriate later subject to the clinical guidelines;
2. The nursing team from the Patient Support Call Centre will review the list of confirmed patients on a daily basis and proactively contact patients of the high-risk groups and conduct health assessment, provide relevant information and support, and advise patients to book at designated clinics for medical consultation, if required; and
3. Calling the enquiry hotline 1836115 for medical support. Referral to doctor tele-consultation will be made if needed. Currently, there are 100 lines for patients to make enquiries.

An Isolation Care Monitoring System will also be launched shortly to support the confirmed patients with a new online platform. "The confirmed patients staying in the community will receive an SMS with a link to register and report serious symptoms. The system will provide health advice and related information platforms. There will also be a channel for patients to report their rapid test results on the designated days of infection. The

details will be announced later," the spokesperson said.

Regarding the support for residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs), the HA Community Geriatric Assessment Teams have stepped up the support, including medical and nursing service provision through outreach and tele-consultation, and supporting RCHEs' arrangements for patients requiring urgent medical attention for hospital admission as appropriate. Doctors will also prescribe COVID-19 oral drugs where clinically indicated according to the clinical guidelines. As for those with relatively serious conditions, they will be sent to hospital for treatment.

For other patients with mild symptoms, they are advised to maintain personal and environmental hygiene and follow the infection control measures during their isolation in the community. Patients should also monitor their health conditions closely. If there are emergency symptoms, such as persistent fever over 38.5 degrees Celsius for more than two days despite taking fever-reducing medicine, a body temperature of 35 degrees C or below, convulsion, shortness of breath, chest or abdomen pain, dizziness or confusion, weakness or unsteadiness, decreased movement of the foetus for pregnant women, or persistent inability to drink or eat, diarrhoea and vomiting for more than two days, patients are suggested to attend an Accident and Emergency Department for treatment.

The HA will continue to monitor the development of the epidemic situation and service demand. Appropriate measures, such as increasing the quota for designated clinics, will be implemented in a timely manner to step up the support for COVID-19 patients in the community.