

# LCQ22: Coronavirus Disease 2019

## vaccines

Following is a question by the Hon Starry Lee and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (May 5):

Question:

It has been reported that a member of the expert advisory group has indicated that the efficacy of the two Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) vaccines currently used in Hong Kong drops when fighting the South Africa COVID-19 variant, but one of the vaccines (i.e. Comirnaty) still has a certain effect. So far, just over 10 per cent of the population in Hong Kong has been vaccinated against COVID-19. However, a vaccination rate of at least 60 per cent is needed to achieve herd immunity. As the first local confirmed case of the South Africa variant has emerged in Hong Kong earlier on, members of the public should receive vaccination expeditiously to prevent the spread of such virus in Hong Kong, which may increase the probability of the virus mutating. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether, in order to encourage members of the public to receive vaccination, the Government will proactively discuss with the Mainland authorities allowing, when the number of COVID-19 confirmed cases in Hong Kong remains at a low level, those Hong Kong residents who have received two vaccine doses and have been tested positive for COVID-19 antibody to enter the Mainland (or only the Mainland cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area at the initial stage) without being subject to the 14-day compulsory quarantine requirement; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(2) given that the experts of the University of Hong Kong and certain countries are conducting studies on the efficacy and safety of mixed vaccination involving different types of vaccines, whether it knows the latest progress of the studies?

Reply:

President,

Vaccination is the current focus of the global anti-epidemic work. The Government has implemented the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme (the Vaccination Programme) since February 26 this year. As of May 3, about 1.53 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been administered to members of the public, with about 970 000 people having received the first dose (accounting for about 14.8 per cent of the population aged 16 or above). The Government will adopt the concept of "vaccine bubble" as announced earlier as the new direction in fighting the epidemic, with an aim to restoring the normal

operations of society in a gradual and orderly manner. However, the premise is that the public needs to work together and get vaccinated proactively in order to help Hong Kong beat the epidemic as soon as possible. Although mutant viruses are spreading rampantly around the globe and Hong Kong recently recorded the first local case of infection with unknown source involving a mutant virus strain, the two authorised vaccines under the Vaccination Programme are still effective in vitro testing against the two mutant viruses detected in the local case. In view of the higher transmissibility of mutant strains, we urge the public to get vaccinated without delay.

In consultation with the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau, my reply to the various parts of the question raised by Hon Starry Lee is as follows:

(1) The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government has been communicating and liaising closely with the relevant authorities in the Mainland and Macao Special Administrative Region Government on disease prevention and control measures, as well as on arrangements for cross-boundary travel for residents of the three places. We are actively exploring the resumption of normal cross-boundary activities amongst residents of the three places in a gradual and orderly manner when the epidemic situation in the three places is under control and without increasing public health risks.

(2) The Health and Medical Research Fund has invited local universities to submit research proposals relating to COVID-19 vaccines, out of which the University of Hong Kong is making preparations for a research study to vaccinate volunteers with a single dose of Comirnaty (a mRNA vaccine) followed by a single dose of CoronaVac (an inactivated vaccine). The objective is to compare with those vaccinated with two doses of Comirnaty or two doses of CoronaVac, in order to provide the relevant data on safety and increasing immunogenicity with respect to the combined use of COVID-19 vaccines. The proposal is under peer review and assessment is expected to be completed within this month.