

Patient Management Workflow Enhanced for Mutant Strains

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The Hospital Authority (HA) will further step up the testing of COVID-19 for Variant of Concern (VOC) following the clinical finding of identifying one case of mutant strain with negative result for N501Y while positive for E484K mutation.

"A 28-year-old male patient returned from the United States of America was first admitted to Queen Elizabeth Hospital and later North Lantau Hospital Hong Kong Infection Control Centre (HKICC) on March 27 for single isolation pending the results of the confirmatory test and gene sequencing," the HA spokesperson said.

"Upon notification by the Public Health Laboratory Centre of the Department of Health that the result for N501Y was negative, the patient was arranged for cohort isolation with three other confirmed patients in HKICC from March 28 afternoon, according to prevailing practice."

The HA received notification last evening that further sequencing test identified E484K mutation in the specimen of this patient.

"In previous available clinical findings, specimens being screened negative for N501Y, a typical mutation strain originated from the United Kingdom, are able to screen out the N501 Y.V2 and P.1 Variant which were first reported in South Africa in August 2020 and Japan/Brazil in December 2020."

As a precautionary measure, HKICC has arranged single isolation each for the index patient and the three patients since 1.00am today.

"HKICC will continue to closely monitor the condition of the four patients and communicate with the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) on the isolation and quarantine requirements for these patients."

â€‹The spokesperson added that no VOC have been identified in any local cases so far. The HA will deliberate further with the CHP and relevant experts on enhancing the workflow of the gene sequencing tests and the subsequent patient isolation arrangement.