

Princess Margaret Hospital updates on cases concerning patient with hepatitis C infection

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

Regarding an earlier announcement on the case concerning two patients with hepatitis C infection, the spokesperson for Princess Margaret Hospital made the following update today (November 26):

Two male patients, aged 24 and 52, admitted to the same cubicle of high dependency unit of the Neurosurgery Department were tested positive with hepatitis C viral in late June. The hospital is very concerned about the cases and has been closely following up on the other 14 patients stayed in the same cubicle, including closely monitoring their clinical situations and conducting multiple hepatitis C viral tests. The results of the 14 patients' hepatitis C viral test have all along stayed negative. The hospital has also strengthened the infection control measures of the ward concerned, including enhanced surveillance and infection control training of hand hygiene, environmental cleansing and care procedures.

As a precautionary measure, the hospital has been conducting medical surveillance to other patients stayed in the ward concerned over the same period. A female patient, aged 60, who is under medical surveillance programme was found to have liver enzymes deranged on November 4. The hospital has arranged the patient to undergo hepatitis C viral test and other examinations immediately and the result was positive with hepatitis C infection.

The patient concerned was admitted to the high dependency unit of the Neurosurgery Department in May. After epidemiological investigation and genetic sequencing, it is showed that the genetic sequence of the female patient's hepatitis C virus is identical with the two male patients infected earlier. As the incubation period for hepatitis C ranges from two weeks to six months, the hospital cannot rule out the possibility of nosocomial infection. The hospital has provided appropriate treatment and follow-up for the patient, including prescribing antiviral drugs and explaining the situation to her and her family members. The patient is in stable condition and was discharged on November 5. Currently, antiviral drugs for acute hepatitis C are highly effective and over 95 per cent of hepatitis C infection can be cured in general. Hepatitis C virus is now undetectable from the two concerned male patients after receiving treatment of antiviral drugs.

The hospital is very concerned about the case and has extended contact tracing investigation as a precautionary measure. The hospital will contact and arrange hepatitis C viral testing for about 200 patients who stayed in the wards concerned during the relevant period and will also provide

continuous health surveillance for these patients.

The hospital has reported the case to the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) and the Hospital Authority Head Office (HAHO). The hospital will continue to follow up with CHP and HAHO.