

Public urged to stay vigilant in fight against tuberculosis (with photos)

The Department of Health (DH), the Hospital Authority (HA) and the Hong Kong Tuberculosis, Chest and Heart Diseases Association today (March 23) jointly staged a health exhibition with educational activities for World Tuberculosis (TB) Day 2019 to remind the public to keep on paying attention to TB and staying vigilant against it.

The Under Secretary for Food and Health, Dr Chui Tak-yi, at the opening ceremony said that TB has been one of the major infectious diseases posing a threat to human health. He said that there is no room for complacency in the prevention and control of TB as it is still prevalent in many places worldwide including the Asia-Pacific region, and called on the public to remain vigilant against the disease as the local TB notification rate is still higher than the rates in some European and American countries and regions.

Dr Chui said the Government attaches great importance to the prevention and control of TB. In recent years, the DH and the HA have adopted molecular technology in quick testing which enables early diagnoses of TB and prevents the disease from transmitting in the community. New drugs have also been adopted to provide more effective treatment for drug-resistant TB.

Also addressing the ceremony, the Controller of the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the DH, Dr Wong Ka-hing, pointed out that the number of TB cases reported in Hong Kong dropped from 697 per 100 000 people per year in 1952 to 58.1 per 100 000 people per year (provisional figure) in 2018. However, according to the World Health Organization (WHO)'s statistics, about 10 million new TB cases were reported globally in 2017 and 1.6 million people died from the disease. In addition, the number of multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) cases is estimated to be 460 000 globally.

Dr Wong added that the incidence rate of MDR-TB has remained at a low level in Hong Kong, but threats posed to the territory by MDR-TB should not be underestimated due to the close contact between the people in Hong Kong and in the neighbouring areas as well as the relatively high incidence rates of MDR-TB in many neighbouring areas.

The WHO has designated March 24 of each year as World TB Day to encourage global efforts to combat TB together. Other officiating guests at the ceremony today included the Chairman of the Hong Kong Tuberculosis, Chest and Heart Diseases Association, Mr Steve Lan, and the HA Chief Manager (Infection, Emergency and Contingency), Dr Vivien Chuang.

The CHP has launched a new announcement in the public interest for broadcast on TV and radio to promote public awareness in combating TB. For more TB-related information, services and figures, the public may also visit

the CHP's page on World TB Day (www.info.gov.hk/tb_chest/worldtbdays.htm) and the website of the Tuberculosis and Chest Service (www.info.gov.hk/tb_chest), call the telephone hotline (2572 6024) or browse the WHO's TB page (www.who.int/tb).

