Queen Elizabeth Hospital announces a cluster of COVID-19 suspected of nosocomial infection

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

Queen Elizabeth Hospital today (July 14) announced a cluster of COVID-19 suspected of nosocomial infection:

A 92-year-old female patient was admitted to the general medical ward via the Accident & Emergency Department in the early morning of July 12 due to her chronic disease. Her nasopharyngeal swab specimen was tested and confirmed positive for COVID-19 on the same evening. She was immediately arranged to be transferred to the isolation ward to continue treatment, and the current situation is stable.

The hospital's infection control team immediately conducted a contact tracing. A nurse who took the specimen for the patient did not wear full set of personal protective equipment. The hospital will maintain close communication with the Centre for Health Protection to arrange the required quarantine arrangements.

Among the 10 patients in the same cubicle, one has died due to her own disease. The hospital arranged isolation treatment and quarantine for the remaining nine patients according to the recommendations of the Centre for Health Protection. In addition, the 27 healthcare staff who had contacted with the patient and the other 44 inpatients in the same ward required medical surveillance. The hospital will provide the staff concerned with the test if required.

Among the nine patients in the same cubicle, a 77-year-old female patient was diagnosed with COVID-19 in the evening of July 13. The patient was sent to the hospital on June 28 due to a fall and was discharged on July 2. However, she was re-admitted to the hospital due to hypertension on the same evening and was transferred to the general medical ward on July 9. In view of the stable condition of the patient, the hospital transferred the patient to â€ªHong Kong Buddhist Hospital on July 12 to continue treatment. â€ªThe nasopharyngeal specimen collected by Hong Kong Buddhist Hospital for this patient was tested negative for COVID-19. However, when QEH learned that the 92-year-old female patient was confirmed, the patient was arranged to return to the hospital for isolation on July 13. After retesting, she was found to be positive for COVID-19 on the evening of July 13. The patient is currently in stable condition.

Hong Kong Buddhist Hospital will arrange for the isolation of five patients who have been in the same cubicle. In addition, 13 healthcare staff who have contacted the patient will undergo medical surveillance.

There is another 64-year-old female patient in the same cubicle with two confirmed patients in the hospital. She was also diagnosed with COVID-19 on July 14. The female patient was admitted to the ward for palliative treatment on June 19 due to chronic disease. However, staff found that the patient had fever on the evening of July 13 and collected a nasopharyngeal swab specimen for the patient. On the afternoon of July 14, it was confirmed to be positive for COVID-19. The patient is currently in stable condition.

Professor Yuen Kwok-Yung, Chair Professor of the Department of Microbiology, University of Hong Kong and Dr Raymond Lai, Chief Infection Control Officer of the Hospital Authority visited QEH tonight. The expert group initially suspected that the virus was likely spread through indirect contact.

The medical ward that the patients had stayed has been suspended for admitting patients and arranged for thorough cleansing.

The hospital will continue to follow up the incident closely with the CHP. The hospital reminds staff again that appropriate personal protective equipment needs to be worn when conducting high-risk procedures for patients. The hospital will continue to maintain close communication with frontline staff, provide the necessary personal protective equipment, reinforce the importance of hand hygiene and also monitor the elderly patients admitted to the hospital.