

Scientific Committees under CHP publish consensus interim recommendations on use of COVID-19 vaccines in Hong Kong

The Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases and the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases under the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health today (January 21) published the consensus interim recommendations reached subsequent to the joint meeting on January 7 on the use of COVID-19 vaccines in Hong Kong.

The meeting, joined by the Chief Executive's expert advisory panel, reviewed the latest scientific evidence on the epidemiology and clinical features of COVID-19, published clinical data on the COVID-19 vaccines to be procured by the Government and local data, as well as recommendations and practices by overseas health authorities.

The current recommendations focused on two vaccines, namely BNT162b2 provided by Fosun Pharma/BioNTech and AZD1222 provided by AstraZeneca.

The recommendations are summarised below:

- Both vaccines consist of a schedule of two doses. Individuals should complete their vaccination with the same type of vaccine.
- Priority should be accorded to high-risk groups that are most vulnerable to the development of severe disease or death from COVID-19 infection, have greater risks of exposure to severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) and transmitting the virus to susceptible and vulnerable patients, or are critical for maintaining essential societal functioning.

- Priority has been suggested to be accorded to the following groups:

First: Residents and staff of residential care homes for the elderly/persons with disabilities and other institutional facilities;

Second: Workers in health-care settings, workers in other essential services who are at increased risk of exposure to COVID-19, and persons aged 60 years or above; and

Third: Persons with chronic medical problems aged between 16 and 59

years.

Members noted that vaccination is only one of the tools in the overall public health response to COVID-19. There is a need to continue public health strategies on non-pharmaceutical interventions, including social distancing, good hand hygiene and wearing a mask in public, to reduce the risk of transmission.

Details on the scientific evidence considered and the rationale for the consensus interim recommendations on the use of COVID-19 vaccines are available at the CHP website (www.chp.gov.hk/en/static/24008.html). The interim recommendations may be updated based on additional safety and efficacy data from phase III clinical trials, international scientific advances and local regulatory developments.