

Scientific committees under CHP review control strategy for novel coronavirus infection

The Scientific Committee on Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases and the Scientific Committee on Infection Control under the Department of Health's Centre for Health Protection this afternoon (February 17) convened a joint meeting to review the measures in light of the latest situation of novel coronavirus infection in Hong Kong.

At the meeting today, members of the Scientific Committees were updated of the latest global and local situation of novel coronavirus infection. They also reviewed the current surveillance and control measures in Hong Kong.

Members agreed that there is evidence of community transmission of novel coronavirus in Hong Kong. In order to stop ongoing spread and prevent the disease from taking root locally, Hong Kong should continue to maintain the current strategy of isolating cases, quarantine of close contacts and medical surveillance of other contacts.

The Scientific Committees acknowledged that as the outbreaks in Mainland China continue to propagate, the existing measures to minimise the population movements between Hong Kong and Mainland China should remain in place and be periodically assessed.

Members also reviewed the quarantine period for contacts of confirmed cases. In view of the existing data on the incubation period of novel coronavirus, the quarantine period for close contacts is recommended to be maintained at 14 days. Members advised that when the quarantine centres have reached their full capacity, the close contacts should be quarantined in designated quarantine facilities for the first 10 days while they could be put under home quarantine for the remaining 4 days on a case-by-case basis.

The Scientific Committees recommended that the entire society should be mobilised to continue to strengthen social distancing measures, personal hygiene (including hand hygiene, cough manner, wearing a mask when having fever or respiratory symptom, etc) and environmental hygiene measures as far as practicable to minimise the further spread of the disease locally.

As some of the cases of novel coronavirus present with mild symptoms, in order to detect mild cases in the community and to have a better understanding of the epidemiological situation, members recommended that the enhanced surveillance be expanded from inpatient to outpatient settings.