

Serious Response Level activated in public hospitals

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The Hospital Authority (HA) spokesperson today (January 4) announced the activation of the Serious Response Level in public hospitals with immediate effect to tie in with the Government launching the Preparedness and Response Plan for Novel Infectious Disease of Public Health Significance, and raising the response level from "Alert" to "Serious".

Following an ad hoc meeting of the HA Central Committee on Infectious Disease and Emergency Responses on the latest situation of cluster of cases of viral pneumonia with unknown cause in Wuhan this morning, a series of measures to enhance monitoring and infection control in public hospitals and clinics will be implemented with immediate effect.

The HA spokesperson said that frontline healthcare staff of public hospitals have been reminded to pay special attention to patient's clinical information, including the presentation of fever and acute respiratory illness, or pneumonia, and travel history to Wuhan within 14 days before onset of symptoms.

The spokesperson also stressed that any suspected case will be isolated in negative pressure isolation room for treatment with urgent laboratory investigation will be arranged immediately.

"Under the Serious Response Level, more stringent infection control measures are enforced in public hospitals including visiting arrangement. There is no visiting at isolation wards unless on compassionate ground. For general acute wards, visiting hours would be not more than two hours per day and not more than two visitors per visit. For convalescent and infirmary wards, visiting hours would be not more than four hours per day and not more than two visitors per visit."

The spokesperson also reminded all visitors to public hospitals and clinics are now required to put on surgical masks and perform hand hygiene before and after visiting patient.

Volunteer service and clinical attachment arrangement in public hospitals will be decided in accordance to the latest situation. On personal protection equipment, such as surgical mask and N95 mask, the current stockpile is adequate for three months' consumption. HA will also maintain a close liaison with the suppliers to ensure a sustainable supply. The isolation beds in the seven hospital clusters will be deployed when needed.

The HA would continue to closely collaborate with the Centre for Health Protection in monitoring the latest situation and keep the general public as

well as healthcare workers updated on developments on a regular basis.