

SFH observes school outreach activity for seasonal influenza vaccination (with photos)

The Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, this afternoon (November 7) visited Fanling Baptist Church Lui Ming Choi Kindergarten in Fanling to observe the arrangements of outreach vaccination activities and the responses of schoolchildren receiving live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV) (i.e. nasal vaccine).

Professor Chan said, "The winter influenza peak usually occurs during January to March or April every year in Hong Kong. Seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) is one of the safe and effective means to prevent seasonal influenza and its complications.

"To encourage more people to receive SIV and increase the overall coverage, so as to achieve the aim of prevention and control of diseases, the Chief Executive has initiated a number of measures in the newly announced Policy Address to increase the SIV uptake rate among schoolchildren. Firstly, the School Outreach Vaccination Pilot Programme has been regularised this year to cover more primary schools, and also expanded to reach out to kindergartens and child care centres (KGs/CCCs) on a pilot basis. So far, about 430 primary schools and 710 KGs/CCCs have respectively enrolled in the two outreach vaccination programmes for primary schools and KGs/CCCs, representing about 65 per cent of the schools concerned across the territory.

"Moreover, the Centre for Health Prevention is also conducting a trial this year to provide LAIV to schoolchildren in 21 schools. The trial aims to test the acceptability and feasibility in applying the vaccine in vaccination programmes."

The kindergarten that Professor Chan visited today has participated in the 2019/20 Seasonal Influenza Vaccination School Outreach (Free of Charge) – Kindergartens/Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres/Child Care Centres (Pilot) (KG/CCC Outreach (Pilot)). Arrangements were made for Government Outreach Teams to conduct LAIV vaccination at the school. The parents of about 300 pupils consented to having their children receive SIV at the school, with the figure representing around 70 per cent of the total number of pupils.

"For eligible children who will not receive SIV under school outreach vaccination, parents can make arrangements for subsidised vaccination for their children in clinics of private doctors enrolled in the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme (VSS). In addition, other eligible persons can also receive subsidised or free SIV vaccination via the VSS and the Government Vaccination Programme (GVP) respectively," Professor Chan added.

Professor Chan called on members of the public to receive SIV early for

protection against seasonal influenza, "While the winter influenza season usually starts in early January, the exact time of arrival cannot be predicted. As it takes about two weeks to develop antibodies, members of the public are advised to receive SIV early for protection against seasonal influenza. Of note, besides high-risk groups such as the elderly, children and immunocompromised patients, healthy people may also contract influenza and develop complications," she said.

The VSS and the GVP have been launched on October 9 and 23 respectively. Meanwhile, the KG/CCC Outreach (Pilot) and the 2019/20 Seasonal Influenza Vaccination School Outreach (Free of Charge) – Primary Schools have also commenced on October 9 and 23 respectively.

As of November 5, 2019, about 143 000 doses of seasonal influenza vaccines had been administered via the GVP and 192 000 doses via the VSS. In addition, about 56 100 and 37 700 doses of seasonal influenza vaccines had been administered via the two outreach vaccination programmes conducted in 151 primary schools and 386 KGs/CCCs respectively. The total number of doses administered by the above programmes was about 428 800, representing an increase of 6.7 per cent from the figures for the same period in the 2018-19 season.



