

Surveillance for COVID-19 Further Enhanced in Public Hospitals

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The Hospital Authority (HA) will conduct admission screening for a random sample of institutional residents and patients admitted to psychiatric wards beginning tomorrow (May 12), to help mitigate the risk of community outbreak at an early stage.

"In view of the evolving global situation of COVID-19 and ongoing widespread community transmission in overseas countries, it is vital to maintain vigilance against potential COVID-19 outbreaks, in particular among the vulnerable groups, which may lead to prolonged hospitalisation and high mortality rate," the HA spokesperson said.

"Admission screening targeted at vulnerable groups will facilitate early case detection and public health intervention to reduce the risk of institutional outbreaks."

"Upon hospital admission, specimens will be collected from asymptomatic institutional residents, who can provide deep throat saliva, from Residential Care Homes for the Elderly, Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities and nursing homes. Patients admitted to psychiatric wards will also be included in this screening programme," the spokesperson added that the new measure was recommended by the HA Central Committee on Infectious Diseases and Emergency Response and supported by the Centre for Health Protection.

At the same time, the "Enhanced Laboratory Surveillance" will be extended to include inpatients presented with influenza-like illness symptoms. The "Enhanced Laboratory Surveillance" for inpatients currently covers any inpatients with pneumonia. The spokesperson said that in view of the presentation of mild respiratory symptoms among COVID-19 patients, public hospitals will also extend the "Enhanced Laboratory Surveillance" to include inpatients presented with influenza-like illness symptoms such as fever, cough or sore throat.

"While there has not been any local case for some days, the situation of COVID-19 can evolve fast and HA needs to frequently adjust its infection control strategy to combat the disease. The enhanced catchment of potential COVID-19 patients will help reduce the risk of local outbreaks and protect the vulnerable groups in the community," the spokesperson said.