

Update on cluster of Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci cases in Princess Margaret Hospital

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

Regarding an earlier announcement on a cluster of Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci (VRE) cases, the spokesperson for Princess Margaret Hospital gave the following update today (March 7):

Following a contact tracing investigation, one more male patient, this one aged 76 years old, and two female patients (aged 73 and 86) in surgical wards were identified as carriers of VRE while not having signs of infection. The patients are now being treated in isolation and are in stable condition.

The wards concerned have adopted the following enhanced infection control measures:

1. Enhanced hand hygiene and stringent contact precautions;
2. Enhanced attention to contamination-prone procedures; and
3. Enhanced disinfection and cleaning of the ward concerned.

The hospital will continue the enhanced infection control measures and closely monitor the situation of the wards concerned. The cases have been reported to the Hospital Authority Head Office and the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health for necessary follow-up.

CHP investigates case of severe paediatric influenza A infection

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (March 7) investigating a case of severe paediatric influenza A infection and reminded the community to heighten vigilance against influenza. The CHP appealed to members of the public to receive seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) in a timely manner to better protect themselves during the influenza season.

The case involves a 10-year-old girl with underlying diseases. She had developed a fever, sore throat and cough with sputum since February 28, and

had visited a Chinese medicine practitioner on March 4. She developed shortness of breath yesterday (March 6) and attended the accident and emergency department of Kwong Wah Hospital and was admitted to the paediatric intensive care unit of the hospital on the same day. Her respiratory specimen was positive for influenza A (H3) virus upon laboratory testing. The clinical diagnosis was influenza A infection complicated with pneumonia. She is now in critical condition.

Initial enquiries by the CHP revealed that the patient had not received SIV for this season and had no travel history during the incubation period. Her home contact is currently asymptomatic. The CHP's investigations are ongoing.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "Influenza can cause serious illnesses in high-risk individuals and even healthy persons. SIV is one of the most effective means to prevent seasonal influenza and its complications, as well as reducing influenza-related hospitalisation and death. SIV is recommended for all persons aged 6 months or above except those with known contraindications. Persons at higher risk of getting influenza and its complications, including the elderly and children, should receive SIV early. As it takes about two weeks to develop antibodies, members of the public are advised to receive SIV early for protection against seasonal influenza. Please see details of the vaccination schemes on the [CHP's website](#)."

A person who gets influenza and COVID-19 at the same time may be more seriously ill and would have a higher risk of death. It is important to receive both SIV and COVID-19 vaccination as soon as possible, in particular for children and elderly persons residing in the community or residential care homes. The public should also maintain good personal and environmental hygiene against influenza and other respiratory illnesses, and note the following:

- Surgical masks can prevent transmission of respiratory viruses from ill persons. It is essential for persons who are symptomatic (even if having mild symptoms) to wear a surgical mask;
- For high-risk persons (e.g. persons with underlying medical conditions or persons who are immunocompromised), wear a surgical mask when visiting public places. The public should also wear a surgical mask when taking public transport or staying in crowded places. It is important to wear a mask properly, including performing hand hygiene before wearing and after removing a mask;
- Avoid touching one's eyes, mouth and nose;
- Wash hands with liquid soap and water properly whenever possibly contaminated;
- When hands are not visibly soiled, clean them with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub;
- Cover the mouth and nose with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissue paper properly into a lidded rubbish bin, and wash hands thoroughly afterwards;
- Maintain good indoor ventilation;
- When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, refrain from

work or attending classes at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly; and

- Maintain a balanced diet, perform physical activity regularly, take adequate rest, do not smoke and avoid overstress.

â€‹The public may visit the CHP's [influenza page](#) and weekly [COVID-19 & Flu Express](#) for more information.

[Safeguarding National Security Bill to be gazetted tomorrow](#)

The Chief Executive in Council has approved today (March 7) the gazettal tomorrow (March 8) and the introduction of the Safeguarding National Security Bill (the Bill) into the Legislative Council (LegCo), with a view to fully implementing the constitutional duty as stipulated under Article 23 of the Basic Law, the Decision of the National People's Congress on Establishing and Improving the Legal System and Enforcement Mechanisms for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region to Safeguard National Security and the Hong Kong National Security Law, in order to ensure the effective safeguarding of national security as early as possible.

It is the constitutional duty of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) to safeguard national security. Article 23 of the Basic Law stipulates that the "Hong Kong Special Administrative Region shall enact laws on its own to prohibit any act of treason, secession, sedition, subversion against the Central People's Government, or theft of state secrets, to prohibit foreign political organizations or bodies from conducting political activities in the Region, and to prohibit political organizations or bodies of the Region from establishing ties with foreign political organizations or bodies". The Decision of the National People's Congress on Establishing and Improving the Legal System and Enforcement Mechanisms for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region to Safeguard National Security (5.28 Decision), which was adopted on May 28, 2020, emphasised again that the "HKSAR must complete the national security legislation stipulated in the Basic Law of the HKSAR at an earlier date". Article 7 of the Hong Kong National Security Law also stipulates that the "Hong Kong Special Administrative Region shall complete, as early as possible, legislation for safeguarding national security as stipulated in the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and shall refine relevant laws".

The HKSAR Government conducted a public consultation on the Basic Law Article 23 legislation from January 30 to February 28 this year, during which 98.6 per cent of the views received showed support and gave positive comments, indicating that the legislation has a strong popular support. The Security Bureau and the Department of Justice have been steadfastly working

at full steam and have completed the drafting of the Bill.

Besides being the constitutional duty of the HKSAR, there is also a genuine and urgent need to legislate for Article 23. The HKSAR has gone through the unbearable and painful experience of having our national security seriously threatened, especially during the Hong Kong version of "colour revolution" and "black-clad violence" in 2019. The geopolitics has become increasingly complex, and national security risks remain imminent. The means taken to endanger national security can come in many different forms and the threat can emerge all of a sudden. Therefore, the HKSAR Government must complete the legislative work as soon as possible to plug the national security loophole. The earlier we complete the legislative work, the sooner we can guard against national security risks.

The Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, said, "To complete the legislative work as soon as possible, I have written to the President of the LegCo, setting forth that the Basic Law Article 23 legislation is the constitutional duty of the entire HKSAR, and hence both the Government and the LegCo have the responsibility and must spare no effort in getting the law enacted as soon as possible. In order to achieve the goal of completing the legislative work as early as possible, I have suggested the LegCo speedily commence the scrutiny of the Bill and consider such means as convening a special LegCo meeting for the First and Second Reading and convening Bills Committee meetings as early as possible, with a view to scrutinising the Bill and completing the legislative process at full speed."

"The HKSAR has to enact the Basic Law Article 23 legislation as soon as possible – the earlier the better. Completing the legislative work even one day earlier means we can more effectively safeguard national security one day earlier. The HKSAR can then focus its efforts on developing the economy, improving people's livelihood and maintaining the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong," Mr Lee continued.

[Strategic directions of drug treatment and rehabilitation services for 2024-2026 \(with photo\)](#)

The Narcotics Division (ND) of the Security Bureau today (March 7) promulgated the Three-year Plan on Drug Treatment and Rehabilitation Services in Hong Kong for 2024-2026 (the Plan), and released it to the anti-drug sector at the Drug Liaison Committee meeting this afternoon. The Plan sets out the strategic directions for the drug treatment and rehabilitation (T&R) services between 2024 and 2026.

A Working Group was set up in March 2023 to support the preparation of the Plan. The working group was led by the Chairman of the Action Committee Against Narcotics (ACAN) Sub-committee on Treatment and Rehabilitation, Professor Dennis Wong, and comprised members from social welfare service units, drug treatment and rehabilitation agencies, medical professionals, academics, the Hospital Authority, and relevant government bureaux and departments.

Professor Wong said, "This is the 10th Three-year Plan published since the first one was published in 1997. The preparation of the Plan has been a valuable process of collaboration and co-creation among the Government, anti-drug service units and other stakeholders in the anti-drug sector. The strategic directions identified in the Plan serve as a reference for service units to develop plans and programmes that could effectively respond to the latest drug situation and needs of drug abusers and rehabilitees of the time."

The ACAN Chairman, Dr Donald Li, said, "With the concerted efforts of the Government and the anti-drug sector, the number of reported drug abusers has declined since the promulgation of the first Three-year Plan. Thanks to the work of the working group and the Narcotics Division, as well as input from the stakeholders, the Plan provides a comprehensive evaluation of the existing treatment and rehabilitation programmes and the challenges ahead. It culminated in strategic directions with reference value to guide the work of service providers in the coming three years."

The Plan sets out a host of 44 strategic directions and they are grouped under seven aspects, namely (a) to foster cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral collaborations; (b) to provide targeted treatment for abusers of psychotropic substances, especially for cocaine, methamphetamine and cannabis; (c) to respond promptly to changing drug scene and social environment; (d) to encourage drug abusers in seeking help and treatment; (e) to provide support for drug abusers from specific population groups that responds to their needs; (f) to provide aftercare support and services; and (g) other areas of anti-drug work. The full text of the Plan is available on the ND website (www.nd.gov.hk/en/index.htm).

T&R is an essential component of the multipronged anti-drug strategy, which also includes preventive education and publicity, legislation and law enforcement, external co-operation, and research.



Person in charge of fishing vessel involved in illegal trawling sentenced

A Mainland male, who conducted illegal trawling on a fishing vessel in Hong Kong waters to the south of Tung Ping Chau in northeastern Hong Kong, was charged with contravening the Fisheries Protection Regulations (Cap. 171A) by using prohibited fishing gear. He pleaded guilty today (March 7) at the Fanling Magistrates' Courts and was fined \$20,000 and sentenced to imprisonment for two weeks, suspended for two years.

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) discovered a shrimp trawler suspected of trawling during patrol in the above-mentioned waters on November 27, 2023. After investigation, the Mainland male who was in charge of the vessel concerned was prosecuted.

An AFCD spokesman reminded the public that a ban on trawling has come into force since December 31, 2012. According to the Regulations, any person using prohibited gear for fishing upon conviction is liable to a maximum penalty of a fine of \$200,000 and imprisonment for six months.

The spokesman said, "The Government is committed to combatting illegal fishing activities in Hong Kong waters. The AFCD will continue to step up patrols and take stringent enforcement action."