

Update on monitoring COVID-19 vaccination

In the preceding week till 11.59pm on December 12, the Department of Health (DH) received 45 reports (Note 1) of adverse events following COVID-19 immunisation. No death case was reported by the Hospital Authority (HA) involving individuals who had received vaccines within 14 days before they passed away and had potential association with vaccination.

As at 8pm on December 12, around 9.65 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines had been administered for members of the public. Around 4.81 million people had received at least one dose of vaccine, accounting for 71.4 per cent of the population aged 12 or above. The DH received 6 506 reports (Note 1) of adverse events (0.07 per cent of the total vaccine doses administered). Among the death cases concerning persons who had been vaccinated, including 51 cases (Note 2) with vaccination within 14 days before they passed away (0.0005 per cent of the total vaccine doses administered), none of the death cases was associated with vaccination.

As at December 12, the Expert Committee on Clinical Events Assessment Following COVID-19 Immunisation had concluded that 35 death cases had no causal relationship with vaccination, and preliminarily considered that 14 cases were not associated with vaccination. Two cases are still pending further information for assessment. The Expert Committee considered that there is no unusual pattern identified so far, and will continue to closely monitor the relevant situation and collect data for assessment.

According to information from the HA, during the period from November 15 to December 12, the ratio of death cases out of those without a vaccination record was 135.2 cases for every 100 000 people, whereas the ratio of death cases for those with a vaccination record was 7.9 cases for every 100 000 people. The overall death rate is similar to that recorded in the past three years. Out of those without a vaccination record, the ratio of death cases with acute stroke or acute myocardial infarction was 6.7 cases for every 100 000 people, whereas the ratio of death cases under the same category for those with a vaccination record was 0.8 cases for every 100 000 people. Furthermore, the ratio of miscarriage cases out of those without a vaccination record was 33.4 cases for every 100 000 people, whereas the ratio of miscarriage cases for those who had a vaccination record was 13.6 cases for every 100 000 people. Based on the statistical analysis of the above figures, there is no evidence that vaccination increases the risk of death or miscarriage for recipients. The relevant reference statistics will be uploaded to the thematic website for the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme.

The majority of non-death cases of adverse events received so far are relatively minor cases. The relevant details can be found in the "Report on the Safety Monitoring of COVID-19 Vaccines in Hong Kong" (www.drugoffice.gov.hk/eps/do/en/doc/Safety_Monitoring_of_COVID-19_Vaccines_in_Hong_Kong.pdf).

"The COVID-19 vaccination rate for the elderly aged 80 or above in Hong Kong is only around 20 per cent at present, meaning that 80 per cent of the elderly in that age group are in a dangerous situation, which is alarming. The Comirnaty and CoronaVac vaccines are highly effective in preventing severe cases and deaths from COVID-19. They can provide effective protection to those vaccinated in preventing serious complications and even death after infection. The Government will expand the third dose vaccination programme to include all people who have received two doses of vaccines for a period of time. The extended programme is targeted to be implemented by early January next year. The Government calls on members of the public who are currently eligible for a third dose to get the dose as soon as possible. As for those not yet vaccinated, especially senior citizens, chronic patients and other immunocompromised persons who face a much higher chance of death after COVID-19 infection, they should get vaccinated as early as possible for better self-protection before the fifth wave strikes Hong Kong," a Government spokesman said.

Note 1: Provisional figures. In the preceding week till 11.59pm on December 12, the DH received one report of suspected myocarditis or pericarditis involving an adolescent in the age group of 12 to 15. The case involved one male aged 13. He experienced chest pains within two days after receiving the first dose of the Comirnaty vaccine. His condition is stable.

Note 2: In the preceding week till 11.59pm on December 12, the DH received one death report involving an individual who had received COVID-19 vaccination within 14 days before passing away. The cases involved a male aged 64. There is no clinical evidence that the incident arose from vaccination.