

Update on monitoring COVID-19 vaccination

In the preceding week till 11.59pm on March 6, the Department of Health (DH) received 42 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 March 6, around 13.57 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines had been administered for members of the public. Around 6.31 million people had received at least one dose of vaccine, including 90.2 per cent of the population aged 12 or above. The DH received 7 131 reports (Note 1) of adverse events (0.05 per cent of the total vaccine doses administered). Among the death cases concerning persons who had been vaccinated, including 77 cases (Note 2) with vaccination within 14 days before they passed away (0.0006 per cent of the total vaccine doses administered), none of the death cases was associated with vaccination.

As at March 9, the Expert Committee on Clinical Events Assessment Following COVID-19 Immunisation had concluded that 53 death cases had no causal relationship with vaccination, and preliminarily considered that 13 cases were not associated with vaccination. 11 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 February 7 to March 6, the ratio of death cases out of those without a vaccination record was 512.2 cases for every 100 000 people, whereas the ratio of death cases for those with a vaccination record was 25.6 cases for every 100 000 people. Out of those without a vaccination record, the ratio of death cases with acute stroke or acute myocardial infarction was 17.3 cases for every 100 000 people, whereas the ratio of death cases under the same category for those with a vaccination record was 1.2 cases for every 100 000 people. Furthermore, the ratio of miscarriage cases out of those without a vaccination record was 40.7 cases for every 100 000 people, whereas the ratio of miscarriage cases for those who had a vaccination record was 9.2 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 current epidemic situation is of grave concern, and death and severe cases involving children and elderly persons have been recorded. Children and elderly persons are our focus of protection in vaccination. For elderly persons, the COVID-19 vaccination rate for the elderly aged 80 or above in Hong Kong is only around 52 per cent at present, meaning that 48 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 has expanded the third dose vaccination programme to include all people who have received two doses of vaccines for a period of time. For persons aged 60 or above who have received two doses of vaccine, the time interval for receiving the third dose has been shortened from six months after the second dose to three months. We call on members of the public who are not yet vaccinated, especially senior citizens, chronic patients and other immunocompromised persons who face a much higher chance of death after COVID-19 infection, to get vaccinated as early as possible for better self-protection. Members of the public who are currently eligible for a third dose should also get the dose as soon as possible. The minimum age for receiving the CoronaVac vaccine has been lowered to three years old, while the minimum age for receiving the Comirnaty vaccine is five years old. We call on parents to arrange vaccination for their children as early as possible for better protection," a Government spokesman said.

Note 1: Provisional figures. In the preceding week till 11.59pm on March 6, the DH received one report of suspected myocarditis or pericarditis involving an adolescent in the age group of three to 15. The case involved a male aged 15. He experienced chest pains within two days after receiving the Comirnaty vaccine. His condition is stable.

Note 2: In the preceding week till 11.59pm on March 6, the DH received six death reports involving individuals who had received COVID-19 vaccination within 14 days before passing away. The cases involved two males and four females aged between 45 to 93. There is no clinical evidence that the incidents arose from vaccination.