

Update on monitoring COVID-19 vaccination

In the preceding week till 11.59pm on June 5, the Department of Health (DH) received 50 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 June 5, around 17.25 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines had been administered for members of the public. Around 6.71 million people had received at least one dose of vaccine, including 93.5 per cent of the population aged 12 or above. The DH received 7 613 reports of adverse events (0.04 per cent of the total vaccine doses administered). Among the death cases concerning persons who had been vaccinated, including 111 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 of today, the Expert Committee on Clinical Events Assessment Following COVID-19 Immunisation had concluded that 72 death cases had no causal relationship with vaccination while for one case the causal relationship with vaccination could not be established (Note 3), and preliminarily considered that 11 cases were not associated with vaccination. Twenty-seven 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 May 9 to June 5, the overall ratio of death cases was 45.5 cases for every 100 000 people, whereas the average ratio of death cases for the same period in 2018 to 2020 was 43.4 cases for every 100 000 people. Among these death cases, the ratio of death cases with acute stroke or acute myocardial infarction was 2.2 cases for every 100 000 people, whereas the average ratio of death cases under the same category for the same period in 2018 to 2020 was 2.8 cases for every 100 000 people. Furthermore, the ratio of miscarriage cases was 13.0 cases for every 100 000 people, whereas the average ratio of miscarriage cases for the same period in 2018 to 2020 was 22.0 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_i

[n_Hong_Kong.pdf](#)).

A Government spokesman said, "While the fifth wave of the epidemic has been substantially contained with daily new cases drastically decreased from tens of thousands during the peak in early March to several hundred in recent days, citizens should not overlook the risk of an epidemic rebound following the gradual resumption of social and economic activities. Deaths and severe cases involving children and elderly persons, who are our focus of protection in vaccination, have been recorded in the fifth wave of the epidemic. For elderly persons, the COVID-19 vaccination rate for the elderly aged 80 or above in Hong Kong is only around 68 per cent at present, meaning that around 32 per cent of the elderly in that age group are in a dangerous situation, which is alarming.

"According to preliminary data analysis, out of the cases reported in the fifth wave, over 95 per cent of the fatal cases are elderly people aged 60 or above, with the proportion of death and hospitalised cases being the highest in those aged 80 or above. Most of the deceased cases are unvaccinated persons. As compared to the Hong Kong overall population, those who have received three doses of vaccine account for a much lower proportion among reported cases, and an extremely low proportion among the hospitalised critical/serious and deceased cases. This demonstrates the effectiveness of three doses of vaccine in preventing infection, serious illness and fatality from COVID-19. Even with just the first dose of vaccine, the risk of death can be significantly reduced. The latest research data from the University of Hong Kong also shows that receiving three doses of either the Comirnaty or CoronaVac vaccine is highly effective for preventing severe cases and deaths with over 90 per cent effectiveness. Members of the public who are currently eligible for a third dose should get the third dose as soon as possible.

"Furthermore, in response to the latest advice from experts, we have started the administration of the fourth vaccine dose for persons aged 60 or above who have received three doses of the Comirnaty or CoronaVac vaccine. They may receive the fourth dose no less than three months after their last dose. For persons aged 18 to 59 with a higher risk of COVID-19 exposure, or a greater risk of COVID-19 exposure and transmission because of their occupational setting, they may choose to receive a fourth dose no less than six months from their third dose. Members of the public may also receive a fourth dose due to personal needs (such as studying abroad or travelling). On the other hand, the minimum age for receiving the CoronaVac vaccine has been lowered to 3 years old, while the minimum age for receiving the Comirnaty vaccine is 5 years old. We call on parents to arrange vaccination for their children as early as possible for better protection."

Note 1: Provisional figures. In the preceding week till 11.59pm on June 5, the DH received two reports of suspected myocarditis or pericarditis involving adolescents in the age group of 3 to 15. The cases involved a female aged 12 and a male aged 13 respectively. They experienced chest pains within two days after receiving the Comirnaty vaccine. Their conditions are stable.

Note 2: In the preceding week till 11.59pm on June 5, the DH received three death reports involving individuals who had received COVID-19 vaccination within 14 days before passing away. The cases involved a female aged 95 and two males aged 77 and 72 respectively. There is no clinical evidence that the incidents arose from vaccination.

Note 3: The case involved a 74-year-old male. The cause of death as shown by the autopsy appears to be anaphylaxis and ischaemic heart disease. At the meeting in June, the Expert Committee reviewed the relevant information of the case and considered that a causal relationship between the death and vaccination could not be established.