

CHP investigates additional SARS-CoV-2 virus cases by nucleic acid tests and rapid antigen tests as well as one imported case earlier involving Omicron mutant strain sub-lineage BA.4

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (May 18) announced the latest epidemic situation of COVID-19. As of 0.00am, May 18, the CHP was investigating 127 additional cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus by nucleic acid tests (46 confirmed cases, 60 asymptomatic cases and 21 cases with pending case status) in the past 24 hours. Separately, 202 additional positive cases through rapid antigen tests (RATs) (98 symptomatic cases and 104 asymptomatic cases) were reported. Hong Kong has recorded a total of 760 808 and 448 589 cases that have tested positive by nucleic acid tests and RATs respectively for the SARS-CoV-2 virus so far.

The aforementioned newly reported cases consist of 31 imported cases (19 cases and 12 cases tested positive by nucleic acid tests and RATs respectively). The CHP is continuing with epidemiological investigations on the cases. Please refer to the "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk) for more information.

Meanwhile, whole genome sequencing analysis by the DH's Public Health Laboratory Services Branch confirmed that an earlier imported case was found to carry the sub-lineage BA.4 under the Omicron mutant strain. It involves a 29-year-old female who arrived in Hong Kong from the United Kingdom on May 8 and tested positive during compulsory quarantine at a designated quarantine hotel. Together with the above new case, Hong Kong has recorded eight imported sub-lineage BA.4 cases in total so far. No cases of the sub-lineage have been found in the local community so far, and the CHP will continue to closely monitor the latest developments.

In addition, as of 0.00am, May 18, a total of 9 152 death cases that had tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus during the fifth wave (since December 31, 2021) were recorded, with 9 074 and 75 deaths reported from the Hospital Authority and public mortuaries respectively as well as three deaths reported from the Chinese University of Hong Kong Medical Centre. Hong Kong has so far recorded a total of 9 365 death cases that have tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Furthermore, among the earlier cases by nucleic acid tests reported, there were cases (including pending cases) changed to confirmed, asymptomatic or re-positive cases. As at yesterday (May 17), the total number of confirmed cases was 331 748, while the figures for asymptomatic cases, re-positive cases and pending/unknown cases recorded since January 1 were 198 375, 23 and

230 535 respectively.

The spokesman for the CHP stressed that as the local situation of COVID-19 infection is still severe, the CHP strongly appeals to the community to continue to comply with social distancing measures, avoid going out and refrain from participating in unnecessary or crowded activities or gatherings. This would lower the risk of infection and prevent the virus from spreading in the community.

â€‹The spokesman reminded that COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective in preventing severe cases and deaths from the SARS-CoV-2 virus. They can provide effective protection to those vaccinated in preventing serious complications and even death after infection. People who have yet to receive vaccination, especially senior citizens, chronic patients and other immunocompromised persons who face a higher chance of death after COVID-19 infection, should get vaccinated as early as possible for self-protection and to reduce the risk of falling seriously ill and death should they get infected.