

CHP of DH responds to media enquiries on B virus human infection

In response to media enquiries about a case of human infection of B virus (also known as herpes simiae virus) announced by the Department of Health (DH) on April 3 last year, the Controller of the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the DH, Dr Edwin Tsui, today (February 28) responded as follows:-

"In the fight against communicable diseases, the CHP adheres to the '3Rs' i.e. real-time surveillance, rapid intervention and responsive risk communication. The CHP has upheld the principles of openness and high transparency in providing the public and healthcare professionals with the latest information and epidemiological situation on communicable diseases as well as relevant prevention and health education through various appropriate channels. At the same time, the CHP conducts necessary epidemiological investigations on reported cases in a timely manner and takes appropriate follow-up, prevention and control measures to minimise the threat of communicable diseases to Hong Kong citizens.

The CHP confirmed the first case of B virus human infection in Hong Kong on April 3 last year, and immediately adopted a multi-pronged approach to prevent the virus from spreading locally. Apart from issuing a [press release](#) on the same day to announce the details of the case (including the case had been receiving treatment at the Intensive Care Unit with critical condition) and reminding the public of the precautions to be taken against the virus, the CHP also immediately notified the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department to take appropriate measures, including [stepping up patrols in country parks and reminding visitors not to feed monkeys](#).

As this was the first case of its kind in Hong Kong, the CHP immediately stepped up local medical surveillance. On April 5 last year, the CHP added the disease to the list of "Other communicable diseases of topical public health concern" and issued [letters](#) to doctors and hospitals in Hong Kong to provide them with clinical and epidemiological information on the case, reminding them to pay attention to the disease during medical consultations and to report suspected cases to the CHP for follow-up.

To continue to educate the public and raise their awareness about the B virus, the CHP has produced promotional leaflets and continued to provide relevant health information on its website and social media since April 5 last year. In addition, the CHP has reported the latest epidemiological investigation results of the case in the Communicable Disease Watch in June last year and yesterday (February 27), reminding the public and healthcare workers to exercise caution against the B virus.

Regarding this case, there was no delay in the CHP's investigation, disease control and prevention, and the publicity and education efforts.

Nevertheless, the CHP is aware of comments that the CHP could have issued another press release on the day of the patient's death to inform the public. The CHP will review the current practice and consider announcing the crucial changes in the clinical conditions of special infectious disease cases as soon as practicable, in addition to announcing the results of the relevant epidemiological investigations, prevention and control work, and public education.

To date, only one case of B virus human infection has been recorded in Hong Kong. However, the virus is naturally carried in the saliva, urine and stool of macaques, which are wild animals commonly found in Hong Kong. Members of the public must remain vigilant and stay away from wild monkeys, avoiding touching or feeding them. If bitten or scratched by a monkey, members of the public should rinse the wound with water as soon as possible and seek medical attention immediately."