

## DH investigates case of undeclared Western drug ingredients detected in powder prescribed by listed Chinese medicine practitioner (with photo)

The Department of Health (DH) today (July 20) urged members of the public who consulted a listed Chinese medicine practitioner (CMP), Fan Fung-kam, practising at the G/F, 7 Yee On Street, Kwun Tong, Kowloon, not to consume the yellowish powder (see photo) she prescribed as it was found to contain undeclared Western drug ingredients.

The DH received a notification of a suspected poisoning case involving a 61-year-old female from the Hospital Authority (HA) earlier. The patient consulted the above CMP for joint pain and was prescribed with the yellowish powder. After taking the powder, the patient developed tiredness, bilateral legs swellings, facial puffiness etc. Laboratory investigation by the HA detected the presence of Western drug ingredients "dexamethasone acetate" and "piroxicam" in the yellowish powder sample from the patient. The patient had attended Union Christian Hospital and was later discharged with continuation of treatment.

Upon receipt of notification, the DH raided the above CMP's practising premises immediately and seized a quantity of powder and one type of blue/white capsules. Preliminary testing results from the Government Laboratory revealed that both the yellowish powder sample from the patient and the type of blue/white capsules contained Western drug ingredients "dexamethasone acetate" and "piroxicam". In response to the incident, a woman aged 61 was arrested by the Police today for illegal sale and possession of part 1 poisons and unregistered pharmaceutical products. Investigation is ongoing.

"Dexamethasone acetate and piroxicam are part 1 poisons and prescription medicines. Dexamethasone acetate is a corticosteroid for treating inflammation. Inappropriate use of corticosteroid may cause serious side effects such as Cushing's syndrome, with symptoms including moon face and muscle atrophy. Piroxicam is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug used to relieve pain and inflammation. Its known side-effects include gastrointestinal discomfort, nausea, peptic ulcer and renal impairment," a spokesman for the DH explained.

The DH will set up a hotline (2961 8949) for public enquiries related to the yellowish powder or blue/white capsules prescribed by the above CMP. The hotline will operate from 9am to 5pm from Mondays to Fridays (except public holidays) starting tomorrow (July 21).

According to the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance (Cap 138), illegal sale and possession of Part 1 poisons and unregistered pharmaceutical products are

criminal offences. The maximum penalty for each offence is a fine of \$100,000 and two years' imprisonment. Upon completion of the investigations, the DH will consult the Department of Justice on prosecution matters. The DH will also refer the case to the Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong for consideration of possible disciplinary action.

Members of the public who have been prescribed with powder by the above CMP who feel unwell or are in doubt should consult healthcare professionals as soon as possible. They should submit the medicines to the DH's Chinese Medicine Regulatory Office at 16/F, AIA Kowloon Tower, Landmark East, 100 How Ming Street, Kwun Tong, Kowloon, during office hours for disposal.