

DH responds to media report on influenza vaccination

â€œIn response to a media report today (January 22) about seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) for school students, a spokesman for the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health gave the following response:

The CHP has been tracking the number of people vaccinated in high-risk priority groups in different age groups in the public and private healthcare sectors through various SIV programmes. For schoolchildren, the CHP has been encouraging schools to arrange SIV school outreach activity by the end of last December. As early as last June, all secondary schools, primary schools, kindergartens/ child care centres were informed of the arrangements for the SIV school outreach whereby schools may choose to join the SIV School Outreach Programme or the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme (VSS) School Outreach Programme to provide free or/and subsidised SIV for schoolchildren with briefing sessions held for schools last August.

After repeated appeals by the CHP, at present, about 1 030 kindergartens/child care centres (97 per cent), about 640 primary schools (98 per cent) and about 490 secondary schools (98 per cent) have completed or are arranging the SIV school outreach activities. This is higher than last year's participation rate (80 per cent of kindergartens/child care centres, 95 per cent of primary schools and 70 per cent of secondary schools).

At present, the vaccination records of all students participating in the SIV Programmes are uploaded to the eHealth System (Subsidies). To protect the health of students, the CHP will contact schools that have not participated in the SIV School Outreach Programme or the VSS School Outreach Programme to learn about the vaccination status of their schoolchildren. Therefore, the allegations in the news report that there was no reporting of the vaccination status and that there was an "information vacuum" are unfounded. The CHP regrets untrue statement. The DH and the schools will take stock of the number of students receiving SIV in the schools, so as to ensure that there is a solid protective barrier to protect the health of students in schools as a whole.

The CHP reiterated that all schools are welcome to participate in the SIV School Outreach Programme or the VSS School Outreach Programme, and that there is no limit to the number of school students to be vaccinated. The CHP urged schools that have not yet provided a confirmed date to arrange vaccination as soon as possible, so as to protect the health of students and to minimise the impact on their learning due to absenteeism caused by influenza.

Since the start of the influenza season on January 9, the CHP has recorded three severe cases of influenza A infection in children who have not

received the SIV. Research studies have shown that influenza vaccination can reduce serious complications and lower school absenteeism. Previous data also showed that schools that have arranged influenza vaccination programmes are less likely to have influenza outbreaks.

Apart from schoolchildren, as Hong Kong has entered the influenza season, the CHP strongly appeal all persons aged six months or above (except those with known contraindications) who have not yet received SIV should act immediately. High-risk groups should also get vaccinated against COVID-19 concurrently to minimise the risk of serious complications and death after infection.

The Government has been encouraging the public to receive SIV as early as possible, and has provided free and subsidised SIV to eligible persons through various SIV programmes. As of January 19, a total of about 1.9 million doses of vaccines were administered under the various SIV programmes, representing an increase of about 6.2 per cent over the same period last year. It also exceeded the total number of doses (about 1 873 000 doses) administered under various SIV programmes last year, reaching a record high.

For the 2025/26 SIV Programmes, the Government is exploring the feasibility of procuring and supplying influenza vaccines for participating private doctors and is obtaining information from suppliers about the market supply situation. We will also request the participating doctors to upload the vaccination records to the eHealth so as to establish a comprehensive and complete personal electronic health record profile for the public.