

FHB responds to media enquiries on COVID-19 testing results

In response to media reports regarding a citizen who received a negative testing result and later tested positive after being admitted to the hospital (case number 9741, confirmed on January 20), the Food and Health Bureau (FHB) responded as follows on January 21:

The Government has all along been closely monitoring the epidemic situation. In the eventuality of a sudden outbreak in certain groups, the Government may arrange for urgent cluster testing in the community testing centres or through mobile specimen collection stations for the relevant locations or premises with confirmed cases based on a need and risk assessment in order to identify the infected persons and cut the transmission chains as soon as possible. The community testing centres set up in multiple districts in Hong Kong have also started in mid-November 2020 to provide professional swab sampling of combined nasal and throat swab (CNTS) for those who undergo self-paid testing services, persons who are subject to compulsory testing as well as targeted groups for COVID-19 testing. Generally speaking, currently specimen collection for the purpose of compulsory testing on a mandatory basis has mostly adopted professional swab sampling.

As of January 20, the 19 community testing centres have provided specimen collection (CNTS) and testing services for more than 640,000 citizens and identified 811 positive specimens (0.13 per cent) for the Centre for Health Protection's confirmation and follow-up action. Mobile specimen collection stations in various districts have also been set up, including those set up for residential buildings subject to compulsory testing notices, to provide professional swab sampling and virus testing for more than 380 000 citizens, among which 283 positive specimens were identified (0.07 per cent). These testing arrangements have effectively detected more than 1 000 confirmed cases. Testing remains an integral part of the strategy in preventing and fighting the virus and the Government will continue to strengthen virus testing and expand the coverage of mandatory, targeted and voluntary testing.

The Government is concerned about media's reports regarding a citizen who received negative results after taking tests in the Yau Tsim Mong District but was later tested positive when he was admitted to the hospital. The Government has immediately contacted the Hospital Authority and the testing service providers (Hong Kong Molecular Pathology Diagnostic Centre and KingMed Diagnostics (Hong Kong) Limited) to obtain more information about the case. As this case may be associated with several cases confirmed earlier (including cases number 9625, 9637 and 9642 which were confirmed on January 18), we will need to further look into the case concerned. The FHB has also engaged Professor Yuen Kwok-yung, a member of the Government's Expert Advisory Panel, to take part in the follow-up action on this incident. The Government will announce further information once available to allay public concerns.

The private laboratories responsible for related testing services include Hong Kong Molecular Pathology Diagnostic Centre (the contractor of the Canton Road mobile specimen collection station) and KingMed Diagnostics (Hong Kong) Limited (the contractor of the Henry G. Leong Yaumatei Community Centre). Both laboratories have participated with satisfactory performance in the external quality assurance programme of the Department of Health, and have the medical testing accreditation of the Hong Kong Laboratory Accreditation Scheme. Furthermore, the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch of the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health also regularly sends specimens to all service providers of the community testing centres for comparison tests to ensure that their sensitivity and specificity meet the criteria. Three rounds of comparison tests have been conducted in the past two months. As of January 20, the Henry G. Leong Yaumatei Community Centre has provided swabbing and testing service to close to 90 000 citizens and identified 312 positive specimens. The mobile testing stations operated by Hong Kong Molecular Pathology Diagnostic Centre in various districts have provided specimen collection and testing services for more than 180 000 citizens and identified 186 positive specimens.