

Public hospitals daily update on COVID-19 cases

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

As at noon today (April 5), public hospitals had reported to the Department of Health the admission of 184 patients (92 male and 92 female, aged 1 month to 77) in the past 24 hours who met the reporting criteria of COVID-19. Appropriate tests have been arranged for the patients.

There are 702 patients under isolation currently. So far, 206 patients who had COVID-19 confirmed or probable infection have been discharged upon recovery.

The Hospital Authority will maintain close contact with the Centre for Health Protection to monitor the latest developments and to inform the public and healthcare workers on the latest information in a timely manner.

Government responds to LegCo member's gathering with people in bar

In response to media enquiries concerning a gathering involving a member of the Legislative Council and some 40 persons in a bar on April 2 night, a government spokesman said the following today (April 4):

The Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap.599G or the Regulation) has taken effect at 0.00am on March 29. The Secretary for Food and Health, in accordance with the Regulation, has prohibited any group gathering of more than four persons in any public places during a specified period from March 29 to April 11.

According to the report, a member of the Legislative Council participated in a group gathering of some 40 persons in a bar on April 2 night. It was alleged that the bar was not in business during the time of the gathering with metal gate closing down by half and participants of the group gathering maintained social distancing during the gathering.

According to the Regulation, a public place is referred to a place that members of the public or some members of the public can access to or be permitted for access from time to time. Even for private properties, if members of the public or some members of the public are allowed access from

time to time, such as food premises, bars and cinemas, such private premises would fall under the definition of public places and hence the requirements of prohibiting group gathering under the Regulation would also be applicable. Whether the group gathering in the bar concerned was conducted in a public place would therefore depend on the actual situation. If the situation at that time allowed members of the public to enter the bar premises, it might have fulfilled the definition of a public place and the requirements of prohibiting group gathering under the Regulation could also be applicable. As stipulated in the Regulation, any person who participates in or organises a prohibited group gathering; or owns, controls or operates the place of the gathering, and knowingly allows the taking place of the gathering, commits an offence. Offenders are liable to a maximum penalty of a fine at level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months.

The 12 exempted group gatherings are listed in the Schedule 1 to the Regulation. One exemption applies to "group gathering for performing any duty of a statutory body or an advisory body of the Government". A group gathering "necessary for the proceedings in the Legislative Council or a District Council" is another exempted group. Note however that the Legislative Council is not a statutory body or an advisory body of the Government. Legislative Councilors participating in or organising group gathering at occasions outside the council, whether or not as a function of the Legislative Council, are also not exempted by the Regulation.

Premises such as bars are high-risk venues in spreading virus. Among the 573 confirmed cases recorded between March 19 and April 1, there are 132 local infection cases (23%). Of which, 69 cases (52.3%, i.e. more than half) involved bars and similar premises, including 28 cases in which the patients had visited different bars in Central. In addition to Central, there are also cluster outbreaks involving customers and performing bands who had been to bars in Wan Chai and Tsim Sha Tsui. In light of these cases, in accordance with the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F), the Secretary for Food and Health required the closure of premises including bars and pubs for a specified period on April 2, 2020.

The Government's legislative intent in prohibiting group gatherings is to reduce the risk of spreading the virus. Owing to the serious situation of COVID-19, members of the public should maintain social distancing to curb the spread of infection. Crowd gatherings are high-risk activities which pose risks to the lives and health of the participants as well as that of other people. Moreover, organisers may be liable to relevant legal responsibilities including criminal liability. The Government urges members of the public again to go out less and avoid social activities such as meal gatherings or other gatherings, and maintain an appropriate social distance with other people in order to break the chain of infection.

Pok Oi Hospital gives response regarding a suspected hospital acquired case of COVID-19

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

Pok Oi Hospital (POH) gives the following response regarding a suspected hospital acquired case of COVID-19 today (April 4):

A 93-year-old male patient with limited mobility was admitted to a Medicine and Geriatric (M&G) ward on 5/F of POH on March 10 because of stroke. He was then transferred to another M&G ward on 8/F on March 28 until he was discharged on April 1. On April 3, the patient was admitted to POH for fever and vomiting. Since he has symptoms of chest infection, he was admitted to a surveillance ward and his nasopharyngeal swab was taken and tested positive for COVID-19. The patient was transferred to Tuen Mun Hospital for isolation and treatment with serious condition.

A team of experts including the Chair of Infectious Diseases, Department of Microbiology of the Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine of the University of Hong Kong, Professor Yuen Kwok-yung; Chief Infection Control Officer of Hospital Authority, Dr Raymond Lai, and the experts from the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) paid a visit to POH this afternoon. Records revealed that a 33-year-old male patient who had stayed in the 5/F M&G ward with the index patient between March 17 to 18 was tested positive to COVID-19 on March 27 (Case 455). This patient who was confirmed to be infected with COVID-19 was arranged to stay outside the cubicle of the index patient during hospitalisation. The experts suspected that the virus was transmitted through indirect contact therefore environmental specimen had been collected.

Patient admission has been suspended and deep cleansing has been arranged for the two M&G wards that the patient had stayed. There are 69 male patients and 5 female patients, aged from 21 to 90-year-old have to be quarantined. POH will arrange tests on COVID-19 for them. POH will also arrange COVID-19 testing for the healthcare workers and staff who have been in touch with the index patient. There will be about 150 people according to preliminary counting. Besides, there is one community nurse of POH who have visited the patient's residence on April 2 for nursing procedure including the replacement of nasogastric tubes. The community nurse has been classified as close contact by the CHP and will be sent to quarantine camp.

POH will continue working closely with CHP on this incident.

Update on COVID-19 test centres

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

From March 20 to 9pm today (April 4), 934 and 206 people have been referred to the test centres at the AsiaWorld-Expo and North Lantau Hospital respectively for COVID-19 viral test. So far, 1045 people have negative test results for COVID-19 and have returned to their residence to continue the home quarantine.

Preliminary positive test results will be further confirmed by the Department of Health and announced as confirmed cases in due course.

CHP investigates 17 additional cases of COVID-19

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health announced that as of 4pm today (April 4), the CHP is investigating 17 additional confirmed cases of COVID-19, taking the number of cases to 863 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 862 confirmed cases and one probable case).

The newly reported cases announced today involve nine males and eight females aged between 6 and 93. Among them, 10 had a travel history during the incubation period and seven are overseas students. The CHP's epidemiological investigations and relevant contact tracing on the confirmed cases are ongoing. For case details and contact tracing information, please see the Annex.

The CHP urged members of the public to maintain an appropriate social distance with other people as far as possible in their daily lives. In particular, they should go out less and avoid social activities such as meal gatherings or other gatherings to reduce the chance of contacting infected persons, who may not present any symptoms, and minimise the risk of outbreak clusters emerging in the community.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "In view of the proliferation of the disease and continuous increase in the number of cases reported around the world, members of the public are strongly urged to avoid all non-essential travel outside Hong Kong.

"The CHP also strongly urges the public to maintain at all times strict personal and environmental hygiene, which is key to personal protection against the infection and prevention of the spread of the disease in the

community. On a personal level, members of the public should wear a surgical mask when having respiratory symptoms, taking public transport or staying in crowded places. They should also perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes.

"As for household environmental hygiene, members of the public are advised to maintain drainage pipes properly, regularly pour water into drain outlets (U-traps) and cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use. After using the toilet, they should put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs,"

The CHP will report the cases to the World Health Organization, National Health Commission, Health Commission of Guangdong Province, relevant health authorities and the Hospital Authority.

The CHP has set up hotlines (2125 1111 and 2125 1122), which operate from 8am to midnight daily, for public enquiries. As at 4pm today, a total of 81 575 calls were received.

Moreover, the Government has launched the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk) for announcing the latest updates on various news on the COVID-19 infection and health advice to help the public understand the latest updates.

To prevent pneumonia and respiratory tract infection, members of the public should always maintain good personal and environmental hygiene. They are advised to:

- Wear a surgical mask when taking public transport or staying in crowded places. It is important to wear a mask properly, including hand hygiene before wearing and after removing a mask;
- Perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes, after touching public installations such as handrails or door knobs, or when hands are contaminated by respiratory secretions after coughing or sneezing;
- Maintain drainage pipes properly and regularly (about once a week) pour about half a liter of water into each drain outlet (U-traps) to ensure environmental hygiene;
- Cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use;
- After using the toilet, put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs;
- Wash hands with liquid soap and water, and rub for at least 20 seconds. Then rinse with water and dry with a disposable paper towel. If hand washing facilities are not available, or when hands are not visibly soiled, performing hand hygiene with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub is an effective alternative;
- Cover your mouth and nose with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissues into a lidded rubbish bin, then wash hands thoroughly; and
- When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, refrain from work or attending class at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly.