

Update on cluster of Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci cases in Tuen Mun Hospital

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

Regarding an earlier announcement on a cluster of Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci (VRE) carriers in a female orthopaedic and traumatology ward, the spokesperson for Tuen Mun Hospital made the following update today (June 25):

In accordance with the prevailing infection control guidelines, the hospital has performed contact tracing and one more 51-year-old female patient was confirmed as a VRE carrier without clinical symptoms. She is still hospitalised and is in a stable condition.

The hospital will continue with enhanced infection control measures and will closely monitor the situation on the ward. The case has been reported to the Hospital Authority Head Office and the Centre for Health Protection for necessary follow-up.

Update on cases of Legionnaires' disease

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (June 25) reported the latest number of cases of Legionnaires' disease (LD), and stressed the importance of using and maintaining properly designed man-made water systems, and that susceptible groups should strictly observe relevant precautions.

From June 17 to 23, one community-acquired case and one imported LD case were reported. Both patients have underlying illnesses.

The first patient, a 57-year-old man, lives in Tower 3, the Capitol, Lohas Park, Tseung Kwan O, while the second patient, a 59-year-old man, was residing in the Mainland during the incubation period.

"Epidemiological investigations are ongoing to identify potential sources of infection, high-risk exposure and clusters, if any," a spokesman for the CHP said.

As of June 23, 26 LD cases have been reported in 2018. In 2017 and 2016, there were 72 and 75 cases respectively.

"Men, people aged over 50, smokers, alcoholics and persons with weakened immunity are more susceptible to LD. Some situations may also increase the risk of infection, including poor maintenance of water systems leading to stagnant water; living in areas with old water systems, cooling towers or fountains; using electric water heaters, whirlpools and spas or hot water spring spas; and recent stays in hotels or vessels," the spokesman said.

Legionellae are found in various environmental settings and grow well in warm water (20 to 45 degrees Celsius). They can be found in aqueous environments such as water tanks, hot and cold water systems, cooling towers, whirlpools and spas, water fountains and home apparatus which support breathing. People may get infected when they breathe in contaminated droplets (aerosols) and mist generated by artificial water systems, or when handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes.

Immunocompromised persons should:

- Use sterile or boiled water for drinking, tooth brushing and mouth rinsing;
- Avoid using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices. A shower may also generate small aerosols; and
- If using these devices, fill the water tank with only sterile or cooled freshly boiled water, and not tap water. Also, clean and maintain them regularly according to manufacturers' instructions. Never leave stagnant water. Empty the water tank, wipe all surfaces dry, and change the water daily.

The public should observe the health advice below:

- Observe personal hygiene;
- Do not smoke and avoid alcohol;
- Strainers in water taps and shower heads should be inspected, cleaned, descaled and disinfected regularly or at a frequency recommended by the manufacturer;
- If a fresh water plumbing system is properly maintained, it is not necessary to install domestic water filters. Use of water filter is not encouraged as clogging occurs easily, which can promote growth of micro-organisms. In case water filters are used, the pore size should be 0.2 micrometres (μm) and the filter needs to be changed periodically according to the manufacturer's recommendations;
- Drain and clean water tanks of buildings at least quarterly;
- Drain or purge for at least one minute the infrequently used water outlets (e.g. water taps, shower heads and hot water outlets) and stagnant points of the pipework weekly or before use;
- Seek and follow medical advice regarding the use and maintenance of home respiratory devices and use only sterile (not distilled or tap) water to clean and fill the reservoir. Clean and maintain them regularly according to the manufacturer's instructions. After cleaning/disinfection, rinse the device with sterile water, cooled

freshly boiled water or water filtered with 0.2-µm filters. Never leave stagnant water. Empty the water tank, keep all surfaces dry, and change the water daily; and

- When handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes:

1. Water gardens and compost gently using low pressure;
2. Open composted potting mixes slowly and make sure the opening is directed away from the face;
3. Wet the soil to reduce dust when potting plants; and
4. Avoid working in poorly ventilated places such as enclosed greenhouses.

The public may visit the CHP's [LD page](#), the [Code of Practice for Prevention of LD](#) and the [Housekeeping Guidelines for Cold and Hot Water Systems for Building Management](#) of the Prevention of LD Committee, and the CHP's [risk-based strategy](#) for prevention and control of LD.

Home Ownership Scheme applicant convicted by court for false statement

An applicant for the purchase of a flat under the Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) was sentenced to a community service order of 80 hours today (June 25) for making a statement to the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) on the declaration form which he knew to be false or misleading as to a material particular by not declaring the net asset value of his non-residential property to the Housing Department (HD).

In this case, the defendant, who applied for the purchase of a flat under the HOS by White Form in 2016, did not declare the net asset value of his land or landed properties on a declaration form. However, the HD found that he actually held a non-residential property jointly with a third party in the declaration period. Having considered his joint ownership of the said property, his concealed asset value was around \$1.4 million. He was later prosecuted by the HD for making a statement to the HA which he knew to be false or misleading as to a material particular, contrary to Section 26(2) of the Housing Ordinance. The defendant was convicted at the Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts on May 28. The magistrate considered a fine as punishment could not reflect the gravity of the offence. After making reference to the probation report, the defendant was sentenced to a community service order of 80 hours today.

An HD spokesman said that the HD always spares no effort in combating false declaration made during application for subsidised housing. He reminded all subsidised sale flats applicants of the legislative requirements whereas if they make statements to the HA which they know to be false or misleading

as to a material particular, contrary to Section 26(2) of the Housing Ordinance, they shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine of \$500,000 and to imprisonment for one year. If they have already purchased and completed the assignment of the subsidised sale flats, pursuant to Section 26B of the Housing Ordinance, the court may order the purchasers to forfeit to the Housing Authority a sum equivalent to the difference between the original purchase price of the flat and the market value at the date of the order. If the estate in which the subsidised sale flat is located is incomplete, the HA may rescind the Agreement for Sale and Purchase previously signed with the purchasers and forfeit the deposit paid by them in accordance with the related clause therein.

Contractors of carriageway resurfacing works in Siu Sai Wan Road convicted for illegally carrying out construction works at night

The contractors of carriageway resurfacing works in Siu Sai Wan Road, Chiu Hing Construction & Transportation Company Limited and Wah Fung Engineering Company Limited, failed to comply with the requirements of the construction noise permit (CNP) and caused noise nuisance to nearby residents. They were fined a total of \$20,000 by Eastern Magistrates' Courts today (June 25) for contravening the Noise Control Ordinance (NCO).

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) received several reports from members of the public in January that the night time works at Siu Sai Wan Road caused noise nuisance. The EPD's site inspection revealed that the contractor did not comply with the CNP requirements while carrying out carriageway resurfacing works during restricted hours, which included the use of multiple items of powered mechanical equipment concurrently and without using noise enclosures. The EPD immediately revoked the CNP of the construction site and informed the Highways Department. The two contractors concerned were then prosecuted by the EPD after evidence gathering.

The NCO aims to protect the public from disturbance of rest. An EPD spokesman stressed that construction contractors should schedule works for the daytime and non-general holidays as far as possible, so as to minimise noise nuisance to the surroundings. If the construction works have to be conducted during the restricted hours (between 7pm and 7am on the following day, or at any time on a general holiday), the contractor has to obtain prior approval from the EPD. Only specified powered mechanical equipment can be used for the construction works and contractors must also implement noise mitigation measures to minimise noise nuisance as stipulated by the

CNP. Otherwise, it constitutes an offence. First-time offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$100,000. A maximum fine of \$200,000 may be imposed on second or subsequent conviction.

Consultation on review of self-financing post-secondary education starts

The Task Force on Review of Self-financing Post-secondary Education released a consultation document today (June 25) to solicit views from members of the public on its preliminary recommendations.

The Chairman of the Task Force, Professor Anthony Cheung, said that the review is premised on the belief that nurturing talent is crucial to the continued development of society, and education is an important social investment. When deliberating on the further development of self-financing post-secondary education, the Task Force has followed the guiding principles of "providing student-oriented quality education", "meeting societal needs and developing Hong Kong's advantages", and "facilitating diversified development of post-secondary education". The Task Force is determined to address the issues concerned through this comprehensive review.

The Task Force considers that the Government should conduct a comprehensive review of policy and measures in support of privately-run institutions in order to further achieve its policy objective of "parallel development". The Task Force also endorses that the self-financing post-secondary education sector should be complementary to the publicly-funded sector, and should maintain its role in providing flexible options and adding diversity to the higher education sector as a whole. To meet the societal needs for talent, the Task Force considers that it is the Government's responsibility to assist in improving the quality of self-financing post-secondary programmes and enhancing the overall academic capacity of privately-run institutions. In addition, there is a need for the self-financing post-secondary sector to conduct reforms so that its development will evolve in tandem with the times.

The Task Force recommends the Government to enhance its support for the self-financing institutions with the following major preliminary recommendations: encourage the self-financing post-secondary institutions to identify their roles and positioning in the higher education landscape; formulate clear policies to improve the quality and governance of self-financing institutions; review and update relevant legislation to foster the development of the self-financing sector; enhance and align the regulatory framework for all institutions providing self-financing locally accredited

local programmes at sub-degree and/or undergraduate levels; and strengthen the role and functions of the Committee on Self-financing Post-secondary Education. The Task Force also sees the need to reposition Associate Degree and Higher Diploma qualifications and review their curriculum framework and relevance, as well as to further promote Higher Diploma education's importance in promoting the economic development of Hong Kong. In regard to stepping up support measures for self-financing institutions and students, the Task Force will seek views on the various recommendations for further discussion. The consultation document has been uploaded to the website of the Education Bureau: www.edb.gov.hk/en/about-edb/press/consultation/index.html.

The Task Force will conduct consultation sessions to collect views from key stakeholders. Members of the public are welcome to tender their views to the Task Force by e-mail to taskforce_sfpe@edb.gov.hk.

The consultation exercise will close on August 31. The Task Force will duly consider the views received. It plans to publish its final review report and make recommendations to the Government by the end of 2018.

To follow up on the announcement in the Chief Executive's 2017 Policy Address, a task force was set up by the Education Bureau to consider issues pertinent to the development of the self-financing post-secondary education sector. Over the past several months, the Task Force, chaired by Professor Cheung, has looked into issues such as the role of the self-financing post-secondary education sector, the regulatory regime and support for the sector, and the future of sub-degree education. Making reference to overseas experience and taking into account the views of stakeholders, the Task Force has consolidated its initial observations and recommendations on the issues concerned in the consultation document.