

Suspension of Service at Kowloon Deaths Registry

Having learned that a staff of Department of Health working at Travel Health Centre (Kowloon) located at 1/F of Cheung Sha Wan Government Offices was notified to have tested positive for COVID-19, in consideration of public health and hygiene, the Kowloon Deaths Registry of the Immigration Department (ImmD) located on the same floor was suspended immediately and will remain closed for three days, the ImmD said today (January 25).

According to guidelines provided by the Centre for Health Protection (CHP), the ImmD arranged thorough cleaning and disinfection for the Kowloon Deaths Registry immediately. The department will also arrange for all staff of the Kowloon Deaths Registry to undergo COVID-19 testing and they are required to work from home until their test results are confirmed negative. If necessary, members of the public may consider proceeding to the office at the Hong Kong Island Deaths Registry (address: 18/F, Wu Chung House, Wan Chai) or call 2961 8841 during operating hours for enquiries.

During the situation of COVID-19 infection, the department has been strictly implementing various disease prevention measures, including measuring the body temperature of persons before entering the building, providing employees with masks and other protective equipment, requiring employees to wear masks when performing duties, and stepping up the cleaning and sterilising measures of the working environment.

The department will continue to maintain close liaison with the CHP and proactively co-operate with its quarantine work. The department has also reminded its staff to pay attention to personal hygiene and stay vigilant. If feeling unwell, staff are reminded to seek medical advice and inform the department as soon as possible.

Queen Elizabeth Hospital announces three healthcare workers tested preliminarily positive for COVID-19

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The spokesperson for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH) made the following announcement today (January 25) on three healthcare workers tested preliminarily positive for COVID-19.

The first nurse tested preliminarily positive had worked in a medical ward. She had running nose, sore throat and headache on January 22 and attended Accident & Emergency Department of QEH yesterday (January 24). She underwent COVID-19 test and was preliminarily tested positive. She is now being treated under isolation and in stable condition. Her last date of duty was January 24. Her daily clinical duty was to provide general nursing care to patients. She had been wearing appropriate personal protective equipment at work in accordance with infection control guidelines. She did not perform any high-risk clinical procedures and had not been in contact with any confirmed COVID-19 infection patients. She lived in an affected building with a confirmed case, and hence the hospital would not rule out the possibility of getting infected in the community.

The second nurse tested preliminarily positive had worked in the isolation ward. She had headache and sore throat on January 23 and hence attended Accident & Emergency Department of QEH yesterday. She underwent COVID-19 test and was preliminarily tested positive. She is now being treated under isolation and in stable condition. Her last date of duty was January 23. Her daily clinical duties included taking care of COVID-19 confirmed patients and she had been wearing appropriate personal protective equipment at work in accordance with infection control guidelines. She did not perform any high-risk clinical procedures.

The third nurse tested preliminarily positive had worked in a medical ward. He had symptoms of cough and sore throat on January 22 and attended Accident & Emergency Department of Ruttonjee Hospital yesterday. He underwent COVID-19 test and was preliminarily tested positive. He is now being treated under isolation and in stable condition. The nurse concerned had worked in the isolation ward from December 7 last year to January 17 this year. His daily clinical duties included taking care of COVID-19 confirmed patients and he had been wearing appropriate personal protective equipment at work in accordance with infection control guidelines. He did not perform any high-risk clinical procedures. He contacted with the second nurse at work for a short period of time on January 13 and both of them wore appropriate personal protective equipment. He was then transferred back to a medical ward on January 18. His last date of duty was January 22. His daily clinical duty was to provide general nursing care to patients. He did not perform any high-risk clinical procedures and had not been in contact with any confirmed COVID-19 infection patients.

After reviewing the case information, the hospital infection control team and the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) did not have sufficient evidence to confirm that there's epidemiological linkage between the three nurses who were tested preliminary positive. The infection control team conducted contact tracing. 10 healthcare workers are classified as close contact and quarantine will be arranged. They have all undergone COVID-19 tests while seven of them are tested negative and the remaining results are pending. As the three nurses had been wearing appropriate personal protective equipment during work, no patient is classified as close contact. As a precautionary measure, the hospital has arranged viral tests for the staff

and patients of wards concerned. 157 staff members and 107 patients have been tested with negative results.

The hospital has arranged thorough cleaning and disinfection for the workplace concerned, staff pantry and changing rooms. As a precautionary measure, the hospital has closed three medical wards temporarily including the one which was with staff positive case earlier. The measure would further worsen the shortage of bed provision. Access block waiting time will be lengthened. Hence, the hospital appeals the public to avoid attending QEH Accident and Emergency Department in order to alleviate the heavy service load. Public understanding is highly appreciated.

As there are three staff members confirmed positive of COVID-19 and QEH is located near the "restricted area" near Yau Ma Tei and Jordan district where the staff would be around for work and reside, after assessing the risk, the hospital will offer tests to all staff starting from tomorrow (January 26). QEH will continue to closely monitor the health of related staff and patients and communicate with the Centre for Health Protection on the latest situation.

DH's staff member of Travel Health Centre (Kowloon) confirmed positive for COVID-19

The Department of Health (DH) announced today (January 25) that a staff member of its Travel Health Centre (Kowloon) located at Cheung Sha Wan Government Offices has tested positive for coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The clinic was closed immediately for thorough cleaning and disinfection, and will remain closed for 14 days. Affected clients will be contacted by the staff of the clinic to reschedule their service appointments. In addition, the Cremation Permit Office (Kowloon) which is connected to the Travel Health Centre (Kowloon) was also closed immediately and will remain closed for three days.

The staff member concerned is a medical and health officer. He last performed duties on January 23 morning. His body temperature was normal when undergoing temperature screening during work. He wore a surgical mask while performing duties and properly maintained social distancing with people he contacted. He subsequently felt unwell on January 23 and collected deep throat saliva sample for testing on the same day. The testing result was positive today.

The staff member concerned had contacted a today's confirmed case of COVID-19 while seeking treatment on January 18.

The DH's Centre for Health Protection has initiated an epidemiological investigation on the above case. Relevant contact tracing is ongoing to identify and trace close contacts of the staff member. Arrangements have also been made for colleagues working with the officer to work from home and they will undergo COVID-19 testing.

The DH is highly concerned about the COVID-19 situation and has been strictly implementing various disease prevention measures during the epidemic, which include providing employees with masks and other protective equipment, stepping up the cleaning and sanitising measures of the working environment, and reminding all staff to maintain personal hygiene and be vigilant at all times.

CHP follows up on COVID-19 confirmed cases and preliminary positive case at Block 5, Laguna City in Cha Kwo Ling

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (January 25) said that as five confirmed cases and one preliminary positive case of COVID-19 recently occurred at Block 5, Laguna City in Cha Kwo Ling, involving units E at three different floors, the CHP is proactively following up to investigate whether the infections of the cases are related, so as to stop the potential risk of further spread of the virus.

The CHP has co-ordinated with related Government departments and conducted a site inspection this morning to the concerned floors and units of Block 5, Laguna City to investigate and examine if environmental factors were involved in the infection of the cases. The CHP took into account the opinions from experts and decided to carry out prudent measures on infection control before completion of inspection of the pipes of the building. The DH will issue quarantine orders to all asymptomatic residents of units E and those units combining with units E on all floors of Block 5, Laguna City (1st Floor to 27th Floor) and transfer them to quarantine centres; symptomatic residents will be sent to the hospital for treatment.

The CHP spokesman urged all individuals who are in doubt about their own health condition, or individuals with exposure to infection risk, to undergo testing promptly for early identification of infected persons.

FHB announces follow-up results of virus test for case number 9741

Regarding media reports about case number 9741 which was confirmed on January 20, and previously underwent COVID-19 testing and received a negative result, the Food and Health Bureau (FHB) responded on January 21, expressing concern and stated that follow up investigation on testing would be conducted. The FHB, having engaged Professor Yuen Kwok-yung, a member of the Government's Expert Advisory Panel, and his team at the University of Hong Kong to conduct a review and analysis, announced the results on January 24.

Case number 9741 consulted a private doctor on January 13. He had developed symptoms at that time but did not undergo testing. He went to the community testing centre at Henry G. Leong Yaumatei Community Centre (operated by KingMed Diagnostics (Hong Kong) Limited) on January 15 and the mobile specimen collection station on Canton Road (operated by Hong Kong Molecular Pathology Diagnostic Centre Limited) on January 18 for virus tests. Both tests returned negative results. The patient later felt unwell and was sent to the hospital on January 18. After admission, the hospital took nasopharyngeal aspirate and throat swab from him for testing and subsequently confirmed positive. The analysis found that the patient had a low viral load (Ct value of 33), and the serum antibody test was tested positive on January 20, indicating a low risk of spreading the virus. The upper respiratory tract specimens previously collected from the patient at community testing centre and mobile specimen collection station showed a viral reaction after re-examination, but the viral load was extremely low (Ct value 39), which exceeded the limit that the common nucleic acid tests can accurately and consistently detect as positive reactions.

Experts estimated that the patient only received sampling for testing many days after the onset of the disease. As a result, when tested repeatedly, there is a chance that results may not be consistently reproducible. Such occurrence is not unusual in the field of molecular biological testing and is not related to the accuracy of the testing procedures. It would be better if the patient in this case had been tested at the first medical consultation.

As for the two asymptomatic close contacts of case number 9741 (case number 9811 and 9812), both of them were tested at the mobile specimen collection station on Canton Road in the morning of January 18 and received negative results. During the quarantine period (January 19) at the quarantine centre, virus tests conducted by the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch of the Department of Health found that their specimens showed weak positive reactions (Ct values higher than 30) and they were arranged to be sent to hospital. After admission to the hospital, they were tested and confirmed, and the virus load was high (Ct values ranged from 16 to 24). Although the two close contacts were tested negative earlier, they were later discovered and diagnosed via contact tracing of case number 9741 by the Department of Health, indicating that the testees may have been in the early stages of the

incubation period. As such, relying on a single negative test result cannot completely rule out the possibility of infection. Relevant research also pointed out that virus testing may not be able to detect infected close contacts if they were in the early incubation period. These cases show that the Department of Health's epidemiological investigations and contact tracing work on all confirmed cases, requiring the relevant persons to undergo 14-day quarantine surveillance as well as undergo testing as necessary, have been effective in identifying the confirmed cases.

The same group of cases also includes two relatives of case number 9741 (case number 9625 and 9642). They were all discovered when they were sampled at a mobile specimen collection station for testing. It is thus a proof that relevant testing arrangements can effectively identify infected people, including asymptomatic patients, and stop the spread of the virus in the community. Case number 9642 tested positive for antibodies and has met the discharge criteria, and was discharged on January 21. Upon further investigation, case number 9637 mentioned earlier was unrelated to case number 9741.

The Government spokesman once again urged that as there are still many silent transmission chains in Yau Ma Tei and Jordan, with asymptomatic diagnosed as confirmed cases, the risk of infection in the community remains high. Local residents are encouraged to undergo testing as soon as possible even if they are not the subject of compulsory testing notices. The mobile specimen collection stations in the district will continue to provide free testing services for all residents in the area (including persons subject to and not subject to compulsory testing). At the same time, if a person subject to compulsory testing has shown symptoms, he/she should seek medical advice immediately and be tested in accordance with the instructions of medical staff. They should not go to mobile specimen collection stations or community testing centres. The Government also urges the public to remain vigilant and pay attention to personal hygiene after receiving a single negative test result. If they feel unwell, they should seek medical attention as soon as possible.