

Chinese medicine services option to be offered to inpatients in Community Treatment Facility

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The Hospital Authority (HA) announced today (January 25) that an option of Chinese medicine (CM) services will be offered to COVID-19 patients staying in the Community Treatment Facility (CTF) at AsiaWorld-Expo from tomorrow (January 26).

The HA is commencing the Special Chinese Medicine Programme for COVID-19 In-patients to provide free CM general consultation to COVID-19 patients receiving treatment at the CTF through the tripartite Chinese Medicine Clinic cum Training and Research Centres (CMCTRs). The Programme aims to provide another treatment option to patients for relieving symptoms.

"Patient enrolment is on voluntary basis. The services will be arranged for eligible persons aged 18 or above who are suitable to be treated with CM after being clinically assessed by a Western medicine (WM) doctor and a Chinese medicine practitioner (CMP)," the HA spokesperson said.

An Expert Panel was formed to develop the clinical protocol for this Programme. Members included CM experts in clinical areas and Chinese medicines from three local universities, together with medicine, infectious disease and toxicology experts of the WM side from the HA and more.

With reference to the current arrangements and operation of WM in the CTF, CMPs will be providing services on-site in non-isolation areas via video with the application of the latest technology. The relevant arrangements also conform to the clinical operation mode and infection control measures of the site. CMPs would follow clinical guidelines outlined in the protocol developed by the Expert Panel to prescribe CM medication. After first consultation, CMPs will arrange follow-up consultation and treatment based on clinical needs.

The HA has all along been supporting the Government on epidemic control including consideration of the role of CMPs in combating COVID-19. The experience gained from the Chinese Medicine Out-patient Programme for Discharged COVID-19 Patients (Out-patient Programme) offering rehabilitation service launched in April 2020 together with the commencement of inpatient service in the CTF would help evaluate the clinical outcome of treating patients under an integrated Chinese-Western medicine model.

Besides the new service in the CTF, eligible persons who have been discharged from public hospitals after COVID-19 treatment can enrol in the Out-patient Programme and receive CM services 10 times for free in 11

participating CMCTRs. Currently, over 700 discharged patients have joined the Out-patient Programme.

Import of poultry meat and products from areas in Germany, France, Japan and Korea suspended

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (January 25) that in view of notifications from the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs of Korea about outbreaks of highly pathogenic H5N8 avian influenza in Wittmund District of the State of Niedersachsen in Germany, Haute-Garonne Department in France and Icheon-si of Gyeonggi-do Province in Korea, and a notification from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan about an outbreak of highly pathogenic H5 avian influenza in Toyama Prefecture in Japan, the CFS has instructed the trade to suspend the import of poultry meat and products (including poultry eggs) from the above-mentioned areas with immediate effect to protect public health in Hong Kong.

A CFS spokesman said that according to the Census and Statistics Department, in the first nine months of last year, Hong Kong imported about 2,500 tonnes of frozen poultry meat and about 880,000 poultry eggs from Germany; about 8,740 tonnes of chilled and frozen poultry meat and about 1.1 million poultry eggs from France; about 50 tonnes of chilled poultry meat, about 4,300 tonnes of frozen poultry meat and about 200 million poultry eggs from Japan; and about 740 tonnes of chilled and frozen poultry meat and about 8.9 million poultry eggs from Korea.

"The CFS has contacted the German, French, Japanese and Korean authorities over the issues and will closely monitor information issued by the OIE and the relevant authorities on the avian influenza outbreaks. Appropriate action will be taken in response to the development of the situation," the spokesman said.

Monthly gravidtrap index for Aedes

albopictus of December 2020 remains at lowest level

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) today (January 25) announced that the monthly gravidtrap index for *Aedes albopictus* (MGI) for December 2020 dropped further to 0.7 per cent from 1.9 per cent in November last year. The index in December remains lowest at Level 1, indicating that mosquito infestation in the areas surveyed was not extensive.

Among the 62 survey areas, no area was recorded with gravidtrap indices exceeding the alert level of 20 per cent. Moreover, the monthly density index for *Aedes albopictus* (MDI) in December 2020 slightly dropped to 1.0 from 1.1 in November, which represented that an average of one *Aedes albopictus* adult was found in the *Aedes*-positive gravidtraps, indicating that the number of adult *Aedes albopictus* was not high in the areas surveyed. The FEHD reminded the public that despite the fact that the index has further dropped and remained at a low level, the breeding and activities of mosquitoes will continue in winter and the community must remain vigilant and continue to carry out effective mosquito prevention and control measures.

As for the port areas, the port monthly gravidtrap index in December rose slightly to 0.1 per cent from 0.03 per cent in November last year, while the port monthly density index in December is 1 as in November.

Looking back, progress has been made in the Government's mosquito prevention and control work in 2020. There was only one local dengue fever case recorded in Hong Kong last year. The monthly local gravidtrap index for *Aedes albopictus* during the past rainy season from May to September was at a similar level to that of previous years, and the recent indices have even dropped to the lowest level at Level 1. Since April 2020, the FEHD has introduced newly designed gravidtraps to replace ovitraps previously used to directly count the number of adult mosquitoes, so as to enumerate the gravidtrap index and the new density index, which reflect the extensiveness of distribution and the density of *Aedes albopictus* respectively. The relevant indices have been launched and widely used.

The FEHD launched its year-end clean-up operation on January 18 this year, during which mosquito preventive and control work will be enhanced, including carrying out inspections, removing stagnant water, applying insecticide and disposing of abandoned water containers weekly to prevent mosquito breeding, and trimming of grass to discourage resting of adult mosquitoes on the site. The FEHD and relevant government departments will continue the above mosquito prevention and control work in areas under their purview and strengthen publicity and education campaigns.

The area gravidtrap index (AGI) and the area density index (ADI) indicate the extensiveness of distribution and the density of *Aedine* mosquitoes respectively in that particular survey area, while the MGI and the MDI are enumerated by pooling together all AGIs and ADIs of the same month,

which reflect the general situation of *Aedes albopictus* in all survey areas. The gravidtrap and density indices for *Aedes albopictus* in different areas and information on mosquito prevention and control measures are available on the department's website at www.fehd.gov.hk.

The spokesman said, "*Aedes albopictus* is a kind of mosquito that can transmit dengue fever (DF) as well as Zika virus infection. DF is commonly found in tropical and subtropical regions of the world, and has become endemic in many countries in Southeast Asia. The World Health Organization also issued warnings that the number of DF cases recorded in Asia last year was higher than before. As Hong Kong has recorded one local DF case last year and the dengue activity in neighbouring areas has remained high, as well as the breeding and activities of mosquitoes will continue in winter, we hope that the public would continue to work with the Government to carry out effective mosquito prevention and control measures."

The spokesman added that as *Aedes albopictus* breeds in small water bodies, members of the public should carry out effective mosquito prevention and control measures including inspecting their homes and surroundings to remove potential breeding grounds, changing the water in vases and scrubbing the inner surfaces, removing the water in saucers under potted plants at least once a week, properly disposing of containers such as soft drink cans and lunch boxes, and drilling large holes in unused tyres. He also advised the public and estate management bodies to keep drains free of blockage and level all defective ground surfaces to prevent accumulation of water. They should also scrub all drains and surface sewers with an alkaline detergent at least once a week to remove any mosquito eggs.

The spokesman reiterated that effective mosquito control requires the sustained effort of all parties concerned. The community must work together with the Government to carry out effective mosquito control measures.

[Grants approved for typhoon victims in the Philippines](#)

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region has accepted the advice of the Disaster Relief Fund Advisory Committee and approved from the Disaster Relief Fund four grants totalling \$9.7 million to four agencies for providing relief to typhoon victims in the Philippines.

Announcing the grants today (January 25), a Government spokesman said that the typhoon had affected around 3.3 million people in the Philippines. The four grants – one of \$2.614 million to Oxfam Hong Kong, one of \$1.951 million to Plan International Hong Kong, one of \$1.825 million to Hong Kong Red Cross and one of \$3.31 million to Save the Children Hong Kong – will be

used to provide hygiene kits, household kits and education kits as well as water purification items and shelter materials to benefit around 57 750 victims. The Committee hoped that the grants would facilitate the provision of timely relief to the victims and help them restore their normal living. The grants, together with a grant approved earlier for this typhoon in the Philippines, will take the accumulative value of grants and number of beneficiaries to \$10.225 million and 67 750 respectively. As the targeted localities of relief agencies or the types of relief items to be distributed are different, there will be no overlapping of resources.

"To ensure that the money is used for the designated purposes, the relief agencies will be asked to submit evaluation reports and audited accounts on the use of the grants after the relief projects have been completed," the spokesman said.

[Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected illicit cigarettes worth about \\$29 million \(with photo\)](#)

â€‹Hong Kong Customs yesterday (January 24) seized about 10.6 million suspected illicit cigarettes in Yuen Long with an estimated market value of about \$29 million and a duty potential of about \$20 million.

During an anti-illicit cigarette operation conducted in Yuen Long yesterday evening, Customs officers seized the batch of suspected illicit cigarettes from a 40-foot-long container at an open space near Fung Kat Heung. A 50-year-old man suspected to be connected with the case was arrested and a lorry suspected to be involved has also been detained.

An investigation is ongoing. Customs will continue to trace the source and the flow of the illicit cigarettes. The likelihood of further arrests is not ruled out.

Smuggling is a serious offence. Under the Import and Export Ordinance, any person found guilty of importing or exporting unmanifested cargo is liable to a maximum fine of \$2 million and imprisonment for seven years.

Under the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance, anyone involved in dealing with, possession of, selling or buying illicit cigarettes commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$1 million and imprisonment for two years.

Members of the public may report any suspected illicit cigarette activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).

