

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (67) in DH SEB CD/8/27/1 IV

14 March 2008

Dear Doctor,

**Latest Influenza Situation and  
Reporting of Suspected Influenza Paediatric Patients  
with Severe Complications**

Hong Kong has entered its peak influenza season. The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) has been monitoring the influenza activity closely and I would like to update you on the latest situation.

We are, as in past years, in the middle of the peak influenza season which started in mid-February and is expected to last till March/April (or sometimes beyond). Like previous influenza seasons, we have received many school outbreak reports of influenza-like illnesses in the past few weeks.

With the increase in the number of influenza cases in schools and the wide media coverage of the deaths of the three children (subsequently mentioned), there have been concerns among parents and school management on whether children should be allowed to attend schools. The Government announced in the evening of March 12 that all primary schools, kindergartens and nursery schools would start their Easter break from March 13 for two weeks.

The arrangement is a precautionary measure. At present there is no indication that there is any significant change of the virus that makes it exceptionally more virulent than the usual influenza virus. During the Easter break, schools will be thoroughly cleansed. The two-week holiday, which is twice the incubation period for influenza, would help reduce transmission among school children.

We are investigating three deaths in previously healthy children aged below 10. H5 and SARS have been ruled out in all of them. There is presumptive evidence of influenza infection in at least two of these children. An expert committee led by Professor YUEN Kwok-yung will investigate the causes of death of the children concerned.



We have stepped up surveillance for severe respiratory illnesses in children. A reporting system for both public and private hospitals has been set up effective from 13 March 2008. The case definition is as follows:

1. **Children > 1 month and ≤ 12 years old on date of admission; AND**
2. **with influenza symptoms (fever and cough); AND with**
3. **One of the following complications:**
  - (a) **Severe pneumonia; OR**
  - (b) **Severe sepsis; OR**
  - (c) **Shock; OR**
  - (d) **Encephalopathy; OR**
  - (e) **Myocarditis.**

You are also reminded to send specimens for the cases to our Public Health Laboratory Centre for laboratory confirmation of influenza. Please enquire your affiliated hospitals for details.

As mentioned in my earlier letter dated 7 March 2008, I would like to request your assistance in reviewing the hospital death data and report to us if there were any **influenza related deaths in children 12-year-old or younger occurring within 7 days of hospital admission since January 1 this year.** Any clinical or laboratory information would be relevant.

You may wish to refer to the daily update on the influenza situation at the CHP website <http://www.chp.gov.hk/>. To prevent influenza, the public are urged to maintain good personal and environmental hygiene and to build up good body immunity by having proper diet, regular exercise and adequate rest, reducing stress and avoiding smoking.

Yours faithfully,



(Dr SK CHUANG)

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**REPORTING OF SUSPECTED INFLUENZA PAEDIATRIC PATIENTS WITH SEVERE COMPLICATIONS**

**CASE DEFINITIONS**

**A case is a hospital inpatient fulfilling the following criteria:**

- 4. Children > 1 month and ≤ 12 years old on date of admission; AND**
- 5. with influenza symptoms (fever and cough); AND with**
- 6. One of the following complications:**
  - (a) Severe pneumonia; OR**
  - (b) Severe sepsis; OR**
  - (c) Shock; OR**
  - (d) Encephalopathy; OR**
  - (e) Myocarditis.**