

## **Management of Avian Influenza in Residential Care Homes for the Elderly**

Management of residential care homes for the elderly (RCHE) should take appropriate measures to ensure maximum protection of residents and staff.

### (A) Acquire an understanding of seasonal influenza / avian influenza / influenza pandemic

- INFLUENZA or 'flu' can be caused by different types of influenza viruses. It is important to differentiate the three different entities of seasonal influenza, avian influenza and influenza pandemic. Influenza spreads mainly by respiratory droplets generated by coughing and sneezing or contact with contaminated surfaces.
  - SEASONAL INFLUENZA occurs in human populations. In Hong Kong, influenza peaks in January to March and July to August every year. The commonest circulating strains are influenza A (H1N1 and H3N2) and influenza B.
  - AVIAN INFLUENZA normally infects birds, including poultry. Possible strains include influenza A (H5, H7 and H9) viruses. Human cases of avian influenza have been reported, mostly resulting from close contact with sick birds. Efficient spread between human beings is not known.
  - INFLUENZA PANDEMIC occurs when a new viral strain emerges and spreads rapidly among the human race which does not possess immunity to the disease. The new viral strain may originate from a human influenza virus or an avian influenza virus. As large numbers of people will fall ill or die from it, great human, social and economic loss will result. Many people would not be able to work due to the sickness, having to stay at home to care for the sick, or upon Government's advice to reduce social contact. Community and economic activities will have to be scaled down.
- According to the World Health Organization, the incubation period for avian influenza H5N1 is 7 days. After being infected, persons may develop symptoms in seven days, but they may start spreading the disease one day before symptoms develop.
- The initial clinical presentation of avian influenza is like other types of influenza, which may include fever, cough, sore throat, headache and muscle ache. However, avian influenza is more often associated with a history of travel to a place with affected poultry and/or contact with sick birds or related laboratory specimens. Some avian flu patients may also present with shortness of breath and diarrhoea. Avian flu may progress to develop high fever, chest infection, lung failure, multi-organ failure and death.

### (B) Get prepared for avian influenza

- Study the Hong Kong Government - Emergency Preparedness for Influenza Pandemic in Hong Kong ([http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/checklist-e\\_flu\\_eng\\_20051105.pdf](http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/checklist-e_flu_eng_20051105.pdf)).

- Comply with the infection control guidelines from Elderly Health Service of Department of Health and Infection Control Branch of Centre for Health Protection, as well as the guidelines from Social Welfare Department.
- Anticipate the need for replacement staff.
- Provide proper hand hygiene facilities for use by staff, residents and visitors at the RCHE.
- Stockpile of adequate personal protective equipment for staff, including masks, disposal gowns, gloves, eye and face shields.
- Prepare to keep a visitor record during serious and emergency response levels.

(C) Before Hong Kong enters pandemic stage

1. If there is a probable / confirmed case in the RCHE, who may be a resident, a staff member or a visitor
  - Cooperate with the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of Department of Health (DH) in case investigation and contact tracing by
    - ◆ providing details of residents, staff and visitors who have contact with the index patient, health records of residents, daily activity schedule of residents, staff duty roster and their sick leave records, and floor plan of the RCHE;
    - ◆ arranging interviews with residents/staff; and
    - ◆ facilitating CHP/DH visits to the RCHE and any other actions considered appropriate to help understand how the disease has been acquired, how far it has spread and what measures are needed to contain it.
  - Cooperate and comply with CHP/DH regarding
    - ◆ instructions on confinement of residents and staff;
    - ◆ suspension of visiting arrangement;
    - ◆ disinfection of RCHE premises with 1:49 diluted household bleach (one part of 5.25% hypochlorite solution in 49 parts of water);
    - ◆ surveillance of the health status of residents and staff; and
    - ◆ monitoring their compliance with chemoprophylaxis.
  - Advise and facilitate any residents or staff who develop influenza-like symptoms to consult doctors and take any other measures as deemed necessary.
    - ◆ Sick staff should not be allowed to work, nor should staff requiring home / camp confinement be allowed to do so. Remind the staff to comply with the health advice and instructions issued by the Government; and
    - ◆ Strictly observe RCHE precautionary measures for maximal protection of residents and staff as in (B) above.
  
2. If the family member of a staff member develops avian influenza
  - Accept sick leave certificates issued by CHP/DH to the staff concerned.

- Strictly observe RCHE precautionary measures for maximal protection of residents and staff as in (B) above.

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