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1 April 2013

Dear Doctor,

Three Human Cases of Influenza A (H7N9)
Reported in Shanghai and Anhui

I would like to draw your attention to three confirmed cases of influenza A (H7N9) in Shanghai and Anhui, notified by the National Health and Family Planning Commission (the Commission) of the People's Republic of China on 31 March, 2013.

The two cases in Shanghai were two men aged 87 and 27, who passed away on March 4 and 10 respectively. As regard to the case in Anhui, the 35-year-old female patient is now in critical condition. Laboratory tests on the three patients' specimens by the Mainland health authorities yielded positive results for influenza A (H7N9).

According to the Commission, the 27-year-old man was a butcher while the 35-year-old woman had exposure history to poultry before the onset of symptoms. No epidemiological link between the three cases was identified. So far, no abnormality was detected among the 88 close contacts of the three cases.

Avian influenza A viruses are classified into low pathogenic and highly pathogenic that refer to their ability to cause severe disease, based upon molecular characteristics of the virus and mortality in birds under experimental conditions. Nine potential subtypes of H7 viruses are known (H7N1, H7N2, H7N3, H7N4, H7N5, H7N6, H7N7, H7N8, and H7N9). Most H7 viruses identified worldwide in wild birds and poultry are low pathogenic avian influenza viruses. H7 virus infection in humans is uncommon, but has been documented in persons who have direct contact with infected birds, especially during outbreaks of H7 virus among poultry. Illness in humans may also include conjunctivitis and/or upper respiratory tract symptoms.

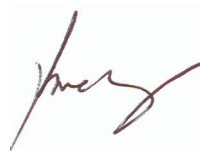


Influenza A (H7) is a statutorily notifiable infectious disease in Hong Kong. So far, no human cases of influenza A (H7N9) infection were recorded in Hong Kong. The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) is maintaining close liaison with the Mainland health authorities to obtain more information on the cases.

In view of the latest development, the Government has put in place a series of prevention and control measures to safeguard public health. In this connection, CHP will further strengthen surveillance for suspected human case of avian influenza infection. I attach (Annex) for your attention the updated Reporting Criteria for Human Influenza A (H5N1)/(H7N9). In addition, I would like to urge you to pay special attention to those who presented with influenza like illness and had history of travel to Anhui and Shanghai within the incubation period (i.e. 7 days before onset of symptoms).

Any suspected case meeting the reporting criteria (<https://ceno.chp.gov.hk/casedef/casedef.pdf>) should be reported to the Central Notification Office of CHP via fax (2477 2770), phone (2477 2772) or CENO On-line (www.chp.gov.hk/ceno). Please also contact the Medical Control Officer (MCO) of the Department of Health at Pager: 7116 3300 call 9179 when reporting any suspected case.

Yours faithfully,



(Dr. SK CHUANG)

for Controller, Centre for Health Protection
Department of Health

Annex

Reporting criteria for Human Influenza A (H5N1)/(H7N9) infection

An individual fulfilling both the *Clinical Criteria AND Epidemiological Criteria* should be reported for further investigation.

Clinical Criteria

A person with acute respiratory illness, characterized by fever (temperature $>38^{\circ}\text{C}$) **AND** one or more of the following:

- cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, and difficulty breathing; **OR**
- person with severe pneumonia; **OR**
- person died of unexplained acute respiratory illness.

Epidemiological Criteria

One or more of the following exposures in the 7 days prior to symptom onset:

- contact with a human case of influenza A (H5N1)/(H7N9); **OR**
- contact with poultry or wild birds or their remains or to environments contaminated by their faeces in countries/areas with documented avian influenza A(H5N1)/(H7N9) infection in birds and/or humans in the recent 6 months ^{see List of affected areas}; **OR**
- consumption of raw or undercooked poultry products in countries/areas with documented avian influenza A(H5N1)/(H7N9) infection in poultry and/or humans in the recent 6 months ^{see List of affected areas}; **OR**
- close contact with a confirmed influenza A(H5N1)/(H7N9) infected animal other than poultry or wild birds; **OR**
- worked in a laboratory that is processing samples from persons or animals that are suspected from avian influenza infection

The list of affected areas is regularly uploaded to the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) website

(http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/global_statistics_avian_influenza_e.pdf).