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Dear Managers / Infection Control Officer,

Increase in Influenza Activity in Hong Kong

The latest surveillance data indicated that the local influenza activity is increasing in Hong Kong. The number of influenza virus detections reported increased from 68 in week ending 12 November, 2011 to 141 in week ending 7 January, 2012. For the same period of time, there was also corresponding increase in influenza-like illness consultation rates among government outpatient clinics (GOPCs) and that among sentinel general practitioners. Preventive measures should therefore be strengthened in institutions/organizations in order to prevent influenza outbreaks.

Young children, elderly people and patients with chronic diseases are more prone to influenza infection and its complications. As institutions and organizations are collective assembly places, infectious diseases like influenza could be easily spread among people through their daily contact. Sources of infection could come from staff, visitors or residents (especially those just discharged from hospitals).

To prevent outbreaks of influenza or other respiratory infections, residents/staff with acute febrile illness should not attend institution/organization till 48 hours after fever has subsided. Besides, residents with fever and respiratory symptoms should be promptly isolated.

The local influenza activity is expected to increase further during the next few weeks. Target groups are advised to receive influenza vaccinations as soon as possible to protect their health.

In addition, the following measures are advised:

- To build up good body immunity by having a proper diet, regular exercise and adequate rest, reducing stress and avoiding smoking;
- To maintain good personal and environmental hygiene;



- To keep hands clean and wash hands properly;
- To cover nose and mouth while sneezing or coughing and dispose of nasal and mouth discharge properly;
- To wash hands after sneezing, coughing or cleaning the nose;
- To maintain good ventilation;
- To avoid visiting crowded places with poor ventilation, especially during influenza season; and
- To wear surgical mask and seek medical advice promptly if symptoms of respiratory tract infection or fever develop.

If you notice an increase in respiratory illnesses or absenteeism among your staff or residents, please report promptly to our Central Notification Office (Tel: 2477 2772; Fax: 2477 2770) for immediate epidemiological investigations and outbreak control. For the latest information on influenza activity, please visit the website of the Centre for Health Protection (www.chp.gov.hk).

Yours faithfully,



(Dr. S K CHUANG)
for Controller
Centre for Health Protection
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