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Dear Doctor,

**Recent Recommendation on Polio Immunisation by
World Health Organization for International Travellers**

We would like to provide you with the latest update on the situation of poliovirus reported by the World Health Organization (WHO). There has been international spread of wild poliovirus from 3 of the 10 states with polio cases. The states which have exported poliovirus include Pakistan, Syrian Arab Republic and Cameroon. In addition, infected states which do not currently export polio cases include Afghanistan, Iraq, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Israel, Somalia and Nigeria. In view of the occurrence of international transmission of poliovirus from the three countries in Asia and Africa in 2014, a meeting of an emergency committee of the WHO was held on 28 and 29 April 2014 and it was subsequently declared by the Director-General of WHO that the international spread of wild poliovirus in 2014 a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC).

In order to prevent further international exportation of polio, WHO recommends, among others, countries currently exporting wild poliovirus, i.e. Pakistan, Syrian Arab Republic and Cameroon, to ensure all their residents and long-term visitors (of over 4 weeks) to receive a dose of polio vaccine 4 weeks to 12 months prior to each international travel. WHO also encourages residents and long-term visitors (of over 4 weeks) of those infected countries which are not exporting wild poliovirus, i.e. Afghanistan, Iraq, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Israel, Somalia and Nigeria, to have polio vaccination 4 weeks to 12 months prior to their international travel. Details concerning the advice from WHO can be accessed through the following link:

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/statements/2014/polio-20140505/en/>.



As you may be aware, poliomyelitis has been made statutorily notifiable in Hong Kong since 1948. With the introduction of polio vaccination in 1963,

the number of polio cases in the locality significantly declined and the last case of acute poliomyelitis due to wild poliomyelitis virus was reported in 1983. As part of the World Health Organization Western Pacific Region, Hong Kong was certified polio-free in October 2000. In order to work towards the global eradication of poliomyelitis and as one of the measures to maintain its polio-free status, the greatest effort has been exerted by adopting a sensitive acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) surveillance system in Hong Kong which was established in 1997. Under the current system, all medical practitioners are requested to report to the Centre for Health Protection any case of AFP among children aged below 15 years and any suspected case of poliomyelitis as soon as possible so that prompt investigation with adequate testing of stool specimen can be arranged.

In response to the recent statement from WHO, the Centre for Health Protection will continue to work closely with WHO and overseas and neighbouring health authorities to monitor the latest developments.

Thank you for your continuous support in combating infectious diseases in Hong Kong.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S K Chuang', written in a cursive style.

(Dr S K CHUANG)

for Controller, Centre for Health Protection
Department of Health