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5 June 2015

Dear Doctors,

**Updated Situation of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome in
Korea**

Further to our letter dated 3 June 2015, we would like to update you on the latest situation of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) in Korea.

So far, nosocomial transmissions of MERS-coronavirus (MERS-CoV) were known to have occurred in at least six healthcare facilities in Korea. Today, the health authority of Korea released the name of one of the six healthcare facilities: **Pyeongtaek St. Mary's Hospital (평택성모병원) located at 439-3, Segyo-dong, Pyeongtaek-si (平澤市), Gyeonggi-do (京畿道), Korea.** According to the health authority of Korea, the index case of this MERS outbreak was hospitalised there from May 15 to 17 and majority (30 cases out of a total of 41) of the confirmed MERS cases have been exposed at this hospital.

As of 5 June 2015, a total of 41 cases have been involved in the current MERS outbreak in Korea, including 40 cases confirmed in Korea and one case exported to Mainland China. The ages of the confirmed cases ranged from 24 to 82 years (median: 54 years) and 28 (68.3%) of them were males. Four cases aged between 57 and 82 years with pre-existing chronic diseases died.

All these 40 cases who were infected in Korea had exposure to MERS patients in healthcare settings (five health care workers, 35 inpatients/visitors). Among them, 30 cases had direct epidemiological linkage with the index (secondary cases), and the remaining 10 cases probably had acquired the infection from other secondary cases in healthcare facilities (tertiary cases). 30 cases (including 28 secondary cases and 2 tertiary cases) acquired the infection in the **Pyeongtaek St. Mary's Hospital (평택성모병원).** Today, the Korean Government is asking people who had attended this hospital between May 15 and 29 to report to them for assessment.



In view of this, we advise people who are currently in Hong Kong and had visited Pyeongtaek St. Mary's Hospital for any reason between 15 and 29 May to contact the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) through our hotline (2125 1111) for further assessment. If you encounter any patients who have fever or acute respiratory symptoms AND have visited Pyeongtaek St. Mary's Hospital, please call our Medical Control Officer (MCO) at Pager: 7116 3300 call 9179 for prompt investigation.

The outbreak in Korea is the largest nosocomial outbreak that has occurred outside of the Middle East. The World Health Organization (WHO) expects that additional cases of MERS-CoV infection may be reported among the persons who were in contact with initial cases before measures were implemented by the public health authorities. The WHO commented that there was no evidence of sustained transmission in the community at this stage. The WHO and the Korea's Ministry of Health and Welfare will conduct a joint mission in the Korea to gain information and review the situation in Korea including the epidemiological pattern, the characteristic of the virus and clinical features.

Please also be reminded that the enhanced surveillance of MERS among patients who had visited healthcare facility in Korea will continue until further notice. Any persons fulfilling both clinical criteria as well as epidemiological criteria are regarded as a suspected case and should be reported to the CHP for prompt investigation. Moreover, we advise the public to avoid unnecessary visits to healthcare facilities in Korea, including participating in medical exchange activities in healthcare facilities. We will closely monitor the situation and review the reporting criteria as appropriate.

Thank you for your unfailing support in prevention and control of communicable diseases.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to read 'Shuk-Kwan' or similar, written in a cursive style.

(Dr. CHUANG, Shuk-Kwan)
for Controller, Centre for Health Protection
Department of Health