

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (17) in DH SEB CD/8/93/1 Pt.2

24 September, 2013

Dear Medical Superintendent,

Vigilance against Middle East Respiratory Syndrome

Further to our letter to you dated 9 July 2013, we would like to provide you with the latest situation on Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), as of 23 September 2013, a total of 130 patients have been confirmed suffering from MERS worldwide, including 108 from the KSA, six from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), five from Qatar, three from the United Kingdom (UK), three from Tunisia, two from Jordan, two from France and one from Italy. Infections presumably acquired through exposure to non-human sources have all occurred in the Middle East; limited transmission in the countries of Europe and North Africa has occurred in close contacts of recent travellers from the Middle East. More than half of the patients were male and their age ranged from 14 months to 94 years (median 50 years). Among them, significant proportions were associated with outbreaks in households and health care facilities. No sustained community transmission has been observed so far. Most patients presented with severe acute respiratory disease requiring hospitalization and eventually required mechanical ventilation or other advanced respiratory support. To date, the case fatality rate is about 45%.

According to WHO, MERS remains active in the Middle East. The recent upsurge in case reporting is of concern and represents both an increase in sporadic cases and several coincident clusters of infection in contacts. So far, no cases have been reported in pilgrims to Saudi Arabia performing Umra during Ramadan yet WHO continues to recommend maintaining a high level of vigilance especially for those countries and area with large numbers of travellers returning from the Middle East. The continued occurrence of clusters in both households and health care facilities highlights the importance of infection prevention control measures in both places to prevent further spread of the virus. Health care providers should



be reminded of the need for universal precautions and the use of infection control measures even before the cause of a patient's illness has been determined.

Locally, the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases (Committee) of the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) has recently convened another meeting in August to discuss the prevention and control of MERS. In view of the potential increased risk of MERS-Coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infection during mass pilgrimages in the coming months, the Committee has recommended strengthening health education for travellers to the Middle East and reinforcing health care facilities to maintain stringent infection control measures. You may wish to refer to the consensus statement from the Committee at the following link:

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

In addition, please find the infection control measures for MERS for health professionals at the following link:

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

Relevant health advice on travelling can also be found under "Current Travel Health News" on the website of the DH's Travel Health Service:

(<http://www.travelhealth.gov.hk/english/outbreaknews/outbreaknews.html>).

So far, no human cases of MERS have been detected in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, the CHP of the DH is keeping close watch over the latest development of the situation and will inform you of any further updates.

Medical practitioners are reminded to notify CHP any suspected cases of MERS fulfilling the reporting criteria to the Central Notification Office (CENO) of CHP via fax (2477 2770), phone (2477 2772) or CENO On-line (<http://ceno.chp.gov.hk/>). Please also call our Medical Control Officer at 7116 3300 a/c 9179 outside office hours for prompt investigation.

Thank you for your ongoing support in combating communicable diseases.

Yours faithfully,



(Dr. SK CHUANG)

for Controller, Centre for Health Protection
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