

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (203) in DH SEB CD/8/61/1 Pt.4

15 June 2017

Dear Medical Superintendent,

Update on the unusual increase in number of hepatitis A virus infection among men who have sex with men and the related hepatitis A vaccination recommendation

Further to the letter to doctors issued on 2 February 2017, I would like to update you on the situation of the unusual increase in number of hepatitis A virus (HAV) infection among men who have sex with men (MSM), and the latest hepatitis A vaccination recommendation made by the Scientific Committee on AIDS and STI (SCAS) and the Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases (SCVPD) under the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health.

Since late 2016, there has been an unusual rise of reported hepatitis A infections among men in Hong Kong. CHP has conducted epidemiological and microbiological investigations to characterise and to assess the extent of the outbreak. A confirmed case was defined as a laboratory-confirmed HAV infection with clinical symptoms in an individual identified as MSM. As of 9 June, 2017, CHP identified a total of 43 cases aged 20 to 51 years (median: 33 years), with symptom onset from September 2015 to May 2017. Thirty-six (83.7%) required hospitalisation and no fatality was recorded. Majority (33 cases, 76.7%) of them were known to be HIV-positive attending one of the three designated public HIV clinics in Hong Kong.

Except a cluster of two patients who were sex partners residing together, no epidemiological link was identified among other cases so far. Laboratory investigation revealed that the HAV from 23 (63.8%) of 36 available specimens from the MSM cases (all genotype 1A) had identical nucleotide sequences within the genotyping window, but no epidemiological linkage among the cases could be found. No common food or water source was identified among these cases and our investigations suggested that male person-to-person sexual transmission would have accounted for this HAV outbreak.



In response to this outbreak, SCAS and SCVPD have updated the recommendation for **hepatitis A vaccine to extend to MSM, in addition to persons with chronic liver disease, persons with clotting factor disorders receiving plasma-derived replacement clotting factors, and travellers to endemic areas** as laid out previously in the recommendations developed by SCVPD, in order to reduce the risk of infections in vulnerable communities. Details of the statement can be found at http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/statement_on_hav_and_msm_201706.pdf.

Doctors are reminded to assess and manage patients with suspected or confirmed hepatitis A comprehensively, taking into account of the extended recommendation of hepatitis A vaccination. If you encounter cases fulfilling the reporting criteria of viral hepatitis, please report the case to the Central Notification Office (CENO) of the CHP by fax (2477 2770), by phone (2477 2772), or via the CENO On-line website (https://cdis.chp.gov.hk/CDIS_CENO_ONLINE/ceno.html). Please draw the attention of the healthcare professionals and supporting staff in your institution/ working with you to the above. Thank you for your ongoing support in combating communicable diseases in Hong Kong.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to be 'SK CHUANG', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

(Dr. SK CHUANG)
for Controller, Centre for Health Protection
Department of Health