

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (51) in DH SEB CD/8/22/1 II
來函檔號 Your Ref :
電話 Tel. :
傳真 Fax No. : (852) 2711 4847

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Dear Doctor,

Update on enterovirus infections

We would like to provide further information regarding the latest situation of enterovirus infection in Hong Kong, in particular the recent reported cases with severe complications.

The surveillance data suggested that we are experiencing a high season of HFMD and enterovirus infection in 2010 as a result of cyclical epidemic behaviour and regional increase in virus activity. As of 10 June, 369 institutional HFMD outbreaks have been reported this year, which has exceeded the annual number of reports during 2001-09 (25 to 236). These outbreaks mostly affected kindergartens and child care centres, followed by primary schools and secondary schools.

Similarly, high activity of EV71 is also recorded. Forty-eight cases of EV71 infection were reported so far this year. Six of them had presented with severe complications included meningitis, meningoencephalitis and brainstem encephalitis. Besides, from May 26 to June 10, Centre for Health Protection (CHP) received 7 other cases with neurological complications associated with other enteroviruses, including Coxsackie A4, A16, B5 and echovirus 9. These findings indicate that enteroviruses of multiple types are circulating in the community, but EV71 is still associated with a higher chance of developing neurological complications. Genetic sequencing studies of circulating enteroviruses found that they are similar to those in previous years.



We have conducted a review of discharge records of Hospital Authority in-patients between 2004-2009 using ICD9-CM codes. Provisional findings showed

an average annual number of about 50 cases (range: around 30-70) of neurological conditions (encephalitis, viral meningitis, encephalopathy, etc.) with positive enterovirus laboratory results. Approximately 55% of them occurred in patients aged ≥ 15 years, which is higher than the proportion (39%) observed for this year. These data suggest that the apparent higher number of adult cases with serious complications observed this year is attributable to greater incidence of enterovirus infection overall and not genetic mutation of enteroviruses occurring this year in Hong Kong.

In order to better understand the activity of enterovirus infections, we have enhanced the surveillance for severe enterovirus infection through public hospitals. Apart from EV71, we are also monitoring the trend of patients who have other enteroviruses related complication (e.g. meningitis, encephalitis, myocarditis, etc).

For further information of HFMD and EV71, please visit the website at http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/view_content/16354.html where you may also find the daily situation update on HFMD and EV71 infection.

Yours sincerely,



(Dr SK CHUANG)

Consultant Community Medicine (Communicable Disease)
Centre for Health Protection
Department of Health