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Dear Managers / Infection Control Officer,

Increase in Activities of Influenza and Respiratory Viral Infections in Hong Kong

Most recent surveillance data showed an increase in influenza activity in Hong Kong, which signals that Hong Kong has entered its winter influenza peak season. In the past two weeks, there were increase in number of influenza isolates detected by our Public Health Laboratory Centre (PHLC) and increase in the consultation rates for influenza-like illness (ILI) among general out-patients clinics and sentinel private doctors. The number of ILI outbreaks occurring institutions and schools also increased from three in the week ending January 8, 2011 to 17 in the week ending January 15. The majority (76%) of influenza viruses isolated in the recent two weeks were influenza A (H1N1) 2009 (i.e. human swine influenza), followed by influenza A (H3N2) (12%) and influenza B (12%).

Besides, PHLC has recently detected increases in a number of respiratory viral infections, including Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), parainfluenza virus and adenovirus. RSV, parainfluenza virus and adenovirus mainly cause acute respiratory tract infections. They can be transmitted by direct contact with infectious secretions, by droplets spread, or indirectly through contaminated hands or articles freshly soiled by oro-nasal discharge of infected persons.

In this regard, I would like to urge you to keep vigilance and implement prompt preventive measures against influenza and other respiratory infections at your institution/organization. Young children, elderly people and patients with chronic diseases are more prone to influenza infection and its complications. As institutions and organizations are collective assembly places, infectious diseases like influenza could be easily spread among people through their daily contact. Sources of infection could come from staff, visitors or clients (especially those just discharged from hospitals).



To prevent outbreaks of influenza or other respiratory infections, clients/staff with acute febrile illness should not attend institution/organization till 48 hours after fever has subsided. Besides, residents with fever and respiratory symptoms should be promptly isolated.

In addition, the following measures are advised:

- Build up good body immunity by having a proper diet, regular exercise and adequate rest, reducing stress and avoiding smoking;
- Maintain good personal and environmental hygiene;
- Keep hands clean and wash hands properly;
- Cover nose and mouth while sneezing or coughing and dispose of nasal and mouth discharge properly;
- Wash hands after sneezing, coughing or cleaning the nose;
- Maintain good ventilation;
- Avoid visiting crowded places with poor ventilation, especially during influenza season; and
- Wear surgical mask and seek medical advice promptly if symptoms of respiratory tract infection or fever develop.

You are reminded to monitor the sick leave pattern among your clients and staff, and report promptly to our Central Notification Office (Tel: 2477-2772; Fax: 2477-2770) if there is a suspected outbreak of respiratory infection in your institution/organization. For the latest information on influenza activity, please visit the website of the Centre for Health Protection (www.chp.gov.hk).

Yours faithfully,



(Dr. S K CHUANG)
for Controller
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