

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (187) in DH SEB CD/8/93/1 Pt.5

1 June, 2015

Dear Principal / Person-in-charge,

Vigilance against Middle East Respiratory Syndrome

I would like to update you on the latest development of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). According to information from the health authority of Korea, a total of 17 laboratory-confirmed cases of MERS have been identified so far (as of June 1), plus an additional case who had travelled to mainland China via Hong Kong. All of these cases were linked to the first case (68-year-old man) who had travelled to several countries in the Middle East (including Bahrain, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Qatar and United Arab Emirates) from April 18 to May 3. He returned to Korea via Qatar and arrived at the Incheon International Airport on May 4 and developed symptoms on May 11.

According to relevant health authorities, epidemiological investigations revealed that a male close contact aged 44 of the third MERS case in Korea (male aged 76) had travelled from Korea to Huizhou, Guangdong via Hong Kong on May 26. He arrived at Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) at around 1 pm by OZ 723 of Asiana Airlines and arrived in Huizhou by coach. He was hospitalized in Guangdong and was laboratory-confirmed by the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention on May 29.

As a precautionary measure, the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) has commenced follow-up investigations and contact tracing of the above case. So far, CHP has put 18 close contacts of the confirmed case under quarantine to prevent the possibility of further spread in case these close contacts develop symptoms during the incubation period. Currently, all the close contacts are so far asymptomatic.



To date, 1152 laboratory-confirmed MERS cases have been reported to the WHO globally, including at least 434 deaths. MERS cases reported by the Middle East, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) in particular, increased in the first

quarter of 2015, most likely due to increased transmission from a primary animal source, such as camels or camel products, to humans, and further human-to-human transmission in hospitals. Scientific studies support the premise that camels serve as the primary source of MERS-CoV infecting humans. A study further suggested that human MERS-CoV infections could be transmitted through close contact with infected camels. The cluster of MERS cases in Korea also signifies that human-to-human transmission of MERS Coronavirus (MERS-CoV) in health-care settings and among close contacts can occur.

We would like to remind you to remain vigilant against MERS, and remind your students or clients not to arrange camel rides and activities involving camel contact, which may increase the risk of infection. Travellers should avoid going to farms, barns or markets with camels, and avoid contact with animals, especially camels, birds, poultry or sick people during travel. Please be reminded to take heed of personal, food and environmental hygiene:

- Avoid going to farms, barns or markets with camels;
- Avoid contact with animals (especially camels), birds, poultry or sick people during travel;
- Wash hands regularly before and after touching animals in case of visits to farms or barns;
- Do not consume raw or undercooked animal products, including milk and meat, or foods which may be contaminated by animal secretions, excretions (such as urine) or products, unless they have been properly cooked, washed or peeled;
- Seek medical consultation immediately if feeling unwell;
- Avoid visits to health-care settings with MERS patients;
- Wash hands before touching the eyes, nose and mouth, and after sneezing, coughing or cleaning the nose; and
- Wash hands before eating or handling food, and after using the toilet.

You may wish to note that the CHP has issued guidelines to school on prevention of MERS which can be accessed at:

http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/advice_to_school_on_prevention_of_middle_east_respiratory_infection.pdf).

Yours faithfully,



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