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5 February 2008

Dear Doctor,

Update on Oseltamivir Resistance in Influenza A(H1N1) Viruses

I would like to draw your attention to the European seasonal influenza surveillance reports, which indicated that some of their A(H1N1) viruses in circulation this winter were resistant to oseltamivir (Tamiflu). About 13% of H1N1 isolates sampled in November and December 2007 from across Europe showed resistance.

All these resistant viruses had neuraminidase H274Y mutation and they were fully sensitive to other influenza antivirals. So far there is no evidence that they are causing more severe illness. Persons with the resistant viruses had no history of oseltamivir treatment and were not epidemiologically linked. For details, you may wish to refer to the “Frequently Asked Questions for Oseltamivir Resistance” recently published by WHO/ECDC at http://www.who.int/csr/disease/influenza/oseltamivir_faqs/en/#whatis.

Our Public Health Laboratory Centre has started testing for amantadine and oseltamivir resistance among influenza viruses circulating in Hong Kong since 2006. It detected no oseltamivir resistant influenza viruses in both 2006 and 2007. In January 2008, five oseltamivir resistant influenza A(H1N1) viruses with the same H274 mutation were detected out of 62 samples.



The influenza A(H1N1) component of our current seasonal influenza vaccine matches with the oseltamivir resistant A(H1N1) virus and is expected to confer good protection. Members of the public who are at higher risk of complications from influenza are advised to be vaccinated (http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/sas6_Influenza_Vaccination_0708_20070530_en.pdf).

CHP is monitoring the situation closely and will continue to test H1N1 viruses for oseltamivir resistance.

Yours faithfully,



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