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31 December 2004

Dear Doctor,

Human H5N1 avian influenza in Vietnam

We would like to draw your attention to a new confirmed human case of Influenza A (H5N1) infection in Vietnam reported by WHO on 30 December 2004. The patient is a 16-year-old girl who fell ill in the southern province of Tay Ninh. This is the first human case of H5N1 detected in Vietnam since early September this year. It coincides with several fresh poultry outbreaks reported in southern provinces in Vietnam in December. Recent poultry outbreaks in Tay Ninh Province have not been reported. Vietnamese authorities are investigating the source of the infection, including the possibility of contact with infected poultry.

Since January of this year, 28 human cases have been reported in Vietnam leading to 20 deaths. Together with cases reported in Thailand, there were a total of 45 cases with 32 deaths. In view of higher activity of avian influenza at cooler temperature, as well as increase in poultry marketing, transportation and consumption approaching Lunar New Year in early February, further poultry outbreaks, possibly accompanied by sporadic human cases can be anticipated in Vietnam. Further details can be found at the WHO website: http://www.who.int/csr/don/2004_12_30/en/print.html.

Influenza A (H5) has been a notifiable disease since 30 January 2004. Upon the amendment to the First Schedule of the Quarantine and Prevention of Disease Ordinance, Cap. 141 today, Influenza A (H7) and Influenza A (H9) will also be added to the list of statutorily notifiable diseases. Please send your notification on cases meeting the reporting criteria to the Central Notification Office of Centre for Health Protection (**Telephone: 24772772, Fax: 24772770**).

We will continue to liaise with WHO and Vietnamese authorities for further information and will inform you any important updates. Please visit our website on avian influenza updates (http://www.chp.gov.hk/content.asp?lang=en&info_id=590).



Yours sincerely,

(Dr Thomas TSANG)
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