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7 January 2010

Dear Doctor,

Expert Group Statement on a Case with Clinical Features Compatible with Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS) following Human Swine Influenza Vaccination

I would like to inform you that the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) had received report of a 58-year-old man who developed lower limb weakness following human swine influenza (HSI) vaccination. The Expert Group on Serious Adverse Events following HSI Vaccination met today and a statement was issued regarding this case.

The patient is a 58-year-old man who developed sudden onset of bilateral calf pain and increasing lower limb weakness since 28 December 2009. He was admitted to QMH on 2 January 2010. He received HSI vaccine on 24 December 2009 in a government outpatient clinic. Clinical examination revealed bilateral ascending lower limb weakness. Currently his condition is listed as serious and his vital signs are stable. Investigations are ongoing to confirm the diagnosis.

The Expert Group is of the view that the clinical features of this patient are compatible with GBS. However, it is not possible to differentiate with reasonable certainty whether the relationship between HSI vaccination and the patient's symptoms is causal or coincidental.

In Hong Kong, between 42 and 65 cases of GBS are recorded each year based on Hospital Authority data from 2000 to 2009, irrespective of vaccination history, with more cases occurring during winter period. The number of GBS cases recorded in October, November and December 2009 was 10, 10 and 6 respectively. As a baseline number of GBS occurs in Hong Kong, it is expected that a certain number of cases will occur following vaccination coincidentally. The incidence of GBS in the month of December 2009 is within normal baseline level in the Hong Kong population.



Over 80 million doses of HSI vaccines have been administered worldwide. To date, overseas reports on adverse events following HSI vaccination do not suggest HSI vaccine is associated with an increased risk of GBS. The World Health Organization (WHO) asserts that the number of GBS worldwide is in line with normal background rates of this illness. Current overseas experience with HSI vaccine found it has not led to increased rate of GBS above background level. The WHO also asserts that HSI vaccine has similar safety profile as seasonal influenza vaccine.

Review of the surveillance data so far continues to support the safety of HSI vaccines. CHP will closely monitor the local and global situation. **The HSI vaccination programme in Hong Kong will proceed as normal.**

Information on vaccination related reports and the statement issued by the Expert Group is available at http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/view_content/19605.html.

Yours sincerely,



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