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Dear Doctor,

Latest Situation of the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) Outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Activation of the Alert Response Level of the Government's Preparedness and Response Plan for EVD

We would like to draw your attention to the ongoing outbreak of EVD in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). In view of the latest situation, the "Alert Response Level" under the Hong Kong Government's Preparedness and Response Plan for EVD was activated on 18 July 2019.

This outbreak was first reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) by the Ministry of Health of DRC on 1 August 2018. The majority of the cases occurred in limited geographical areas within two northeastern provinces - North Kivu and Ituri. The weekly number of cases has increased since March 2019. According to the latest information from WHO, the intensity of the epidemiological situation was fluctuating, with about 80 new cases reported weekly. There was continued shifting of hotspots and seeding to new or previously cleared areas. More recently on 14 July 2019, a confirmed case of EVD was reported in Goma, the capital of North Kivu Province with two million inhabitants on the border with Rwanda. Since the start of the EVD outbreak in the DRC in August 2018, there have been 2,522 confirmed or probable cases including 1 698 deaths (as of July 16). At least 136 cases affected health workers including 40 deaths. Moreover, a cluster of three EVD cases imported from DRC was detected in Uganda in June 2019.



In the wake of the latest development, WHO convened a meeting of the International Health Regulations (2005) Emergency Committee on 17 July 2019. The Committee concluded that the conditions for a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) have been met. According to the risk assessment of WHO, the risk of EVD transmission is very high at national and regional levels

but is low at global level. WHO advised against any restrictions on travel and trade with DRC.

EVD is caused by Ebola virus. The disease is transmitted to human through contact with blood, secretions, organs or other body fluids of infected animals including chimpanzees, gorillas, fruit bats, monkeys, forest antelopes and porcupines. Human-to-human transmission is also possible through direct contact with blood, secretions, organs or other body fluids of infected people, and indirect contact with environments contaminated with such fluids. Healthcare workers have frequently been infected through close contact with patients when infection control measures are not strictly practised.

In Hong Kong, viral haemorrhagic fever (including EVD) has been listed as a notifiable disease since July 2008. No case of EVD has been recorded in Hong Kong so far. Medical practitioners managing patients with travel history to DRC (within 21 days before illness onset) and with compatible symptoms are advised to take into consideration the possibility of EVD. Suspected cases should be isolated immediately and notified to the Central Notification Office (CENO) of the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) via fax (2477 2770), phone (2477 2772) or CENO On-line (https://cdis.chp.gov.hk/CDIS_CENO_ONLINE/ceno.html). Please call our Medical Control Officer (MCO) at 7116 3300 a/c 9179 when reporting any cases outside office hours for prompt investigation. For private doctors, please also call our MCO for arrangement for transfer of the patient to a public hospital for isolation, testing and treatment.

The CHP will continue to remain vigilant of the development concerning the EVD outbreak in DRC, strengthen disease surveillance and implement effective preventive and control measures in Hong Kong as appropriate. For further information on EVD, please visit the CHP website at http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/view_content/34199.html. Thank you for your unfailing support in prevention and control of communicable diseases.

Yours faithfully,



(Dr Albert AU)

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