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Dear Medical Superintendents,

Decolonization therapy for patients with community-associated methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* infection

We write to inform you about the latest recommendations on the prevention and control of community-associated methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (CA-MRSA) by the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases (SCEZD) under the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (available from: http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/summary_of_recommendations_for_prevention_and_control_of_ca_mrsa_in_hong_kong.pdf).

CA-MRSA usually causes skin and soft tissue infections such as pimples, boils or abscesses. Sometimes, more serious sequelae such as bloodstream infection, lung infection or necrotizing fasciitis may occur. Since CA-MRSA was listed as a notifiable disease in 2007, the number of cases of CA-MRSA infection reported to the CHP has been on an increasing trend. The population incidence of CA-MRSA infection based on notifications in Hong Kong was 15.6 cases per 100,000 population in 2016, which was still grossly lower than the incidences in some overseas countries including the United States and Western Australia.

The SCEZD was of the view that the 'search and destroy' strategy of providing empirical decolonization therapy to CA-MRSA patients and their close contacts has contributed to dampen the transmission of CA-MRSA in Hong Kong and maintain the local incidence at a relatively low level as compared to countries without such policy.

To strengthen the prevention and control of CA-MRSA in Hong Kong, the SCEZD recommended that empirical decolonization therapy should continue to be provided to patients confirmed to have CA-MRSA infection and their close contacts **without** the need of prior screening of carriage status. Taking reference from overseas practices and to improve the acceptance rate of decolonization, the SCEZD recommended that decolonization of CA-MRSA patients is to be offered by the attending clinician/hospital/clinic providing medical care for the episode of CA-MRSA infection in



both public and private sectors as part and parcel of clinical management. Besides, decolonization therapy should be provided to the close contacts of CA-MRSA patients, either by the attending clinician/hospital/clinic of the index patient or by the CHP.

The 5-day topical decolonization therapy includes two items: (1) 4% chlorhexidine gluconate liquid soap (Hibiscrub or other product containing the same active ingredient) to be apply daily as liquid soap to whole body for 5 days, and as a shampoo to hair and scalp on days 1, 3 and 5; and (2) 2% mupirocin nasal ointment (Bactroban or other product containing the same active ingredient) to be applied three times daily into anterior nares of both nostrils for 5 days. The above decolonization therapy should be prescribed to your patients confirmed to have CA-MRSA infection for use as soon as possible **after** recovery of the current episode of CA-MRSA infection. Nonetheless, decolonization therapy is generally not recommended for children under 12 years of age.

Apart from providing decolonization therapy to the patients, please be reminded that all cases of CA-MRSA should be reported to the Central Notification Office of the CHP via fax (2477 2770), phone (2477 2772) or CENO On-line (https://cdis.chp.gov.hk/CDIS_CENO_ONLINE/ceno.html). The case definition is available from the above CENO On-line hyperlink. Upon notification of CA-MRSA cases, we will contact the patients for epidemiological investigation, provision of health advice, and offer decolonization therapy to their close contacts (e.g. household contacts, boy/girlfriend, carer, etc.) if any. Your medical staff can also arrange decolonization therapy for the close contacts of your patients if they are able to make the arrangement.

To facilitate doctors and healthcare professionals to perform decolonization for CA-MRSA patients under their care, the CHP has provided information on the decolonization therapy and the recommended regimen on the designated webpage for CA-MRSA (English: <http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/content/9/24/5392.html>; Chinese: <http://www.chp.gov.hk/tc/content/9/24/5392.html>). Health advice and information for patients is also available on the above webpage. Please draw the attention of the healthcare professionals and supporting staff in your institution/ working with you to the above. Thank you for your ongoing support in combating communicable diseases.

Yours faithfully,



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