

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (1) in DH SEB CD/8/100/1

12 July 2019

Dear Medical Superintendent / Hospital Chief Executive,

Reporting of *Candida auris*

We write to draw your attention to the recent cases of *Candida auris* recorded by the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health, and inform you of the arrangement for reporting of cases of positive isolation of *C. auris* from human specimens collected from hospital in-patients to the CHP.

Candida is a fungus commonly found in natural environments especially moist and warm environments. In humans, it is commonly found in body sites such as the oral cavity, the digestive tract, skin and the vagina. It is a common fungus living on or in the human body but can occasionally cause infections, especially in individuals with impaired immunity. For infected cases of *C. auris*, the clinical presentations vary from mild to potentially life-threatening or fatal infections, depending on which part of the body is affected and the general health of the patient. *C. auris* is known to be resistant to many of the potential anti-fungal drugs of choice, which will limit the therapeutic options and affect treatment outcome. Therefore it is crucial to practise proper antimicrobial use and maintain good personal hygiene, especially hand hygiene, in order to prevent emergence and cross-transmission of *C. auris*.

Globally, *C. auris* has become increasingly prevalent since 2016 in many overseas regions including North America, Europe and other continents. Emergence of *C. auris* has been notoriously linked with nosocomial outbreaks in healthcare facilities.

In Hong Kong, an outbreak involving seven cases of *C. auris* was recently detected (as of July 10). The seven cases were all males, with age ranging from 42 to 85 (median of 59 years). The first identified case, aged 48 with good past health, was admitted to the intensive care unit of Princess Margaret Hospital on 19 May 2019 with the diagnosis of pulmonary embolism. *C. auris* was detected from the culture of his endotracheal aspirate obtained in mid-June and the finding was subsequently confirmed



by the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch (PHLSB) of CHP. Upon contact tracing, six additional cases of *C. auris* carriers were identified. They did not have any symptoms of infection. All the seven cases were in-patients who had stayed in the same male ward. Among them, four had underlying illnesses (two with hypertension, two with diabetes mellitus and one with carcinoma of colon) while two had good past health and one had unknown past medical history. Infection control measures including isolation of the cases and strict contact precautions have been stepped up by the hospital. Investigation is ongoing.

In view of the latest local situation, we would like to alert you to be vigilant about *C. auris* in hospital environments. Special attention should be paid to patients who had stayed in hospital in countries/areas with reports of *C. auris* outbreaks. In addition, confirmed or suspected *C. auris* isolates should be sent to the Microbiology Division of the PHLSB for confirmation and further characterisation. Each referred isolate should be accompanied by one completed referral form detailing the clinical information and preliminary laboratory findings of each case. The referral form, laboratory contacts and further instructions may be found in "Guide to Requests for Laboratory Testing" (<https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/grp-specimenhandbook-en-2004122802.pdf>).

If you encounter hospital in-patients with specimens tested positive for *C. auris*, please report to the Central Notification Office (CENO) of CHP via fax (2477 2770), phone (2477 2772) or CENO On-line (https://cdis.chp.gov.hk/CDIS_CENO_ONLINE/ceno.html) for epidemiological investigation and implementation of control measures. Please note that every single case should be reported. The form is available on the CHP website: <https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/hpf-form3-en-20150109.pdf>.

Please draw the attention of the healthcare professionals and supporting staff in your institution/ working with you to the above. Thank you for your unfailing support in the prevention and control of communicable diseases.

Yours faithfully,



(Dr Albert AU)

for Controller, Centre for Health Protection
Department of Health