

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (12) in DH CDB/9/12/6 Pt. 1

January 9, 2020

Dear Medical Superintendent,

**Latest Progress on the Cluster of Pneumonia Cases in Wuhan**

Further to our letter dated January 6, 2020, we would like to update you the latest progress of the identification of the pathogen for the reported cluster of pneumonia cases in Wuhan, Hubei Province (湖北省武漢市).

According to information from the National Health Commission (NHC), the Mainland's expert group has preliminarily determined that the pathogen of the cluster of viral pneumonia cases occurring in Wuhan is a kind of novel coronavirus. The relevant Mainland laboratory has detected a novel coronavirus and obtained the whole genome sequence of the virus.

The expert group revealed that molecular testing of 15 cases were positive for the novel coronavirus, and the virus was also isolated from a sample of a case. Under electron microscopy, the virus showed the typical appearance of coronavirus. The expert group added that testing for nucleic acid, genome and antibodies from the samples of patients could be completed within a short period, thereby assisting in confirmation of the pathogen. Nonetheless, virus isolation and pathogenicity studies would take several weeks. Moving forward, further deliberation by experts taking into consideration pathogen research, epidemiological investigation and clinical assessment is needed.

The Public Health Laboratory Services Branch under the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) is conducting molecular testing for a number of coronaviruses. The CHP has already contacted the NHC regarding the novel coronavirus notified by NHC today, and expressed the wish to obtain relevant information of the virus, including its genetic sequence, so as to provide accurate testing for this novel coronavirus.

On the other hand, the World Health Organization (WHO) earlier pointed out that there is limited information to determine the overall risk of

this reported cluster of pneumonia. The WHO emphasised that more comprehensive information is required to understand the current status and epidemiology of the outbreak, and the clinical picture. Further investigations are also required to determine the source, modes of transmission, extent of infection and countermeasures implemented.

The Mainland and Hong Kong are now amid the winter influenza season and there is extensive travel especially with the approaching Lunar New Year holidays, we would like to seek your assistance in providing health advice to your patients to receive seasonal influenza vaccination (for persons aged 6 months or above except those with known contraindications) before travelling and they should always maintain good personal and environmental hygiene when travelling abroad.

For prevention measures, please visit the CHP's pages below for more information:

- Webpage on Personal Hygiene  
(<https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/healthtopics/content/460/19899.html>)
- Video on "Prevent diseases · Maintain good hygiene"  
(<https://youtu.be/X0OxrsgAP2w>)

We will closely monitor the situation and update you further when more information becomes available. Please draw the attention of the healthcare professionals and supporting staff in your institution/ working with you to the above. Thank you for your continuous support in combating communicable diseases.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'SK Chuang', written in a cursive style.

(Dr. SK Chuang)

for Controller, Centre for Health Protection  
Department of Health