

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (92) in DH CDB/9/12/6 Pt. 3

February 3, 2020

Dear Medical Superintendent,

Updated situation of novel coronavirus infection

We write to provide you an update on the situation of novel coronavirus (nCoV) infection and urge you to remain vigilant against nCoV.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared on 30 January that the outbreak of nCoV meets the criteria for a Public Health Emergency of International Concern and made temporary recommendations. For the latest situation, according to the National Health Commission (NHC), there were 17205 confirmed cases of nCoV infection in Mainland China with all provinces/cities reporting confirmed cases (as of 2 February). Among the cases, 2296 cases were in serious condition and 361 were fatal cases. Community transmission of nCoV is occurring in Hubei.

According to the Health Commission of Guangdong Province, there were 725 confirmed cases of nCoV infection in Guangdong with 20 cities/areas affected (as of 3 February noon). As of 3 February 6pm, there were at least 181 cases of nCoV infection exported to other countries/areas. As the situation evolves rapidly, it is expected that further international exportation of cases may appear in any country. Information on the number of cases reported in various countries/areas is available on the designated webpage of the Centre for Health Protection (CHP):

https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/statistics_of_the_cases_novel_coronavirus_infection_en.pdf

In Hong Kong, the CHP has enhanced surveillance since 31 December 2019. As of 2 February, 15 cases of nCoV infection were confirmed. The patients involved 9 males and 6 females with ages ranging from 37 – 80 years. They had onset of illness between 18 January and 1 February 2020. As of 2 February, 12 were in stable condition, two in serious condition and one in critical condition requiring intubation. Among the cases, seven were residents of Wuhan who travelled to Hong Kong, four were local residents who had travelled to Wuhan, and two were local residents who had contact



with other confirmed cases. The place of infection of the remaining two cases were still under investigation but the possibility of locally acquired infections exist. Contact tracing of their close contacts are ongoing. The CHP has set up a hotline (2125 1122) to answer public enquiries.

There is clear evidence of human-to-human transmission of nCoV. Besides, it was reported that cases might be infectious even before the onset of symptoms.¹ Hence, it is very important to remain vigilant for suspected cases. Travel and exposure history must be elicited from patients presenting with fever or acute respiratory symptoms. In addition, you are advised to step up infection prevention and control measures including carrying out temperature screening for patients/clients/visitors upon their arrival at your hospital/clinic. Those with fever and respiratory symptoms should be advised to wear a surgical mask.

Please report suspected cases fulfilling the reporting criteria of “Severe Respiratory Disease associated with a Novel Infectious Agent” 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). The case definition is available on the above website of CENO On-line. Private doctors are reminded to call the Medical Control Officer (MCO) of the Department of Health (DH) at Pager: 7116 3300 call 9179 immediately when reporting any case. The CHP will make arrangement to transfer the patient to a public hospital by ambulance for isolation, testing and treatment.

Apart from carrying nCoV tests for cases fulfilling our reporting criteria, the Hospital Authority has enhanced laboratory surveillance in public hospitals. The following patients will be tested irrespective of exposure or travel history: (i) all in-patients with community acquired pneumonia; and (ii) any pneumonia case (irrespective of travel history) either with unknown cause (not responding to treatment in three days) / requiring ICU care / occurring in clusters / who is a healthcare worker.

The CHP has also updated the travel health advice. Hong Kong residents returning from the Mainland should take note of the following:

- Members of the public returning to Hong Kong from the Mainland should stay home as far as possible if circumstances allow. Those who need to go out should wear a surgical mask for 14 days after returning to Hong

¹ Rothe C, Schunk M, Sothmann P, et al. Transmission of 2019-nCoV Infection from an Asymptomatic Contact in Germany. N Engl J Med. 2020 Jan 30. doi: 10.1056/NEJMc2001468. [Epub ahead of print]

Kong.

- Hong Kong residents who have visited Hubei Province in the past 14 days should wear a surgical mask immediately and approach staff of the DH's Port Health Division upon arrival. They will be quarantined for observation after a health assessment.
- Hong Kong residents who had been to Hubei Province in the past 14 days but have already returned to Hong Kong should wear a surgical mask immediately and contact the DH hotline (2125 1122) for arrangement to be quarantined for observation.

The CHP will continue to liaise with the WHO, the NHC and overseas health authorities, and closely monitor the situation for risk assessment. Please draw the attention of the healthcare professionals and supporting staff in your institution/ working with you to the above. May I take this opportunity to thank you for your continuous support in combating infectious disease in Hong Kong.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to read 'SK Chuang', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

(Dr. SK Chuang)

for Controller, Centre for Health Protection
Department of Health