

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (123) in DH CDB/8/34/1 Pt.2

5 August 2022

Dear Medical Superintendent,

**Vigilance against malaria**

We would like to draw your attention to the recent upsurge in imported malaria cases and enlist your support in the notification and prevention of the disease.

From 1 July to 4 August 2022, the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health recorded a total of 30 imported malaria cases involving 30 male patients aged 25 to 57 arriving in Hong Kong from 1 July to 1 August, among which 21 arrived from Guinea. All patients underwent quarantine at designated quarantine hotels in accordance with relevant entry requirement upon arrival. A 52-year-old patient passed away during the quarantine period and post-mortem results revealed that he carried the malaria parasite. Epidemiological investigation and follow-up actions are ongoing.

Malaria is caused by a group of malaria parasites, namely *Plasmodium falciparum*, *Plasmodium malariae*, *Plasmodium ovale*, *Plasmodium vivax* and *Plasmodium knowlesi*. It is commonly found in many parts of tropical and sub-tropical areas where the climate is warm, such as Africa, South-East Asia and South America. Transmission occurs when a female anopheline mosquito becomes infected by biting a malaria patient, and passes the disease when it bites another person. Malaria is not transmitted from person to person. However, malaria can be transmitted through contaminated blood or blood product transfusion, organ transplant, or shared needles or syringes. It may also be transmitted from a mother to her foetus/newborn baby before or during delivery.

Symptoms of malaria include fever, chills, headache, muscle pain and weakness, cough, vomiting, diarrhoea and abdominal pain. If not treated promptly, complications include anaemia, generalised convulsion, circulatory collapse, and organ failure such as kidney failure, coma and death.

There are effective drugs against malaria but early diagnosis and prompt treatment are crucial. The World Health Organization (WHO) advises travellers



heading to malaria-endemic regions to use chemoprophylaxis and adopt anti-mosquito measures for prevention of infection. For vaccines preventing malaria, WHO advises only children in malaria-endemic regions to receive the vaccination but not adults. The vaccine is also not applicable for travellers going to these malaria-endemic regions. As such, strict environmental hygiene, mosquito control and personal protective measures remain the most effective means against malaria both locally and during travel.

In regard to the current situation, we would like to appeal for your vigilance towards patients with clinically compatible illness and travel history to endemic countries, in particular Guinea and other African countries. If you identify a confirmed case of malaria as per the reporting criteria below, please arrange isolation and promptly report to the Central Notification Office (CENO) of the CHP via fax (2477 2770), phone (2477 2772) or CENO On-line ([https://cdis.chp.gov.hk/CDIS\\_CENO\\_ONLINE/ceno.html](https://cdis.chp.gov.hk/CDIS_CENO_ONLINE/ceno.html)). For suspected cases with compatible travel history and clinical criteria, you may consider referring the patient to public hospital for further assessment.

#### **Reporting criteria**

A confirmed case of malaria refers to a patient who meets **both** the clinical and laboratory criteria as set out below:

##### *Clinical Criteria*

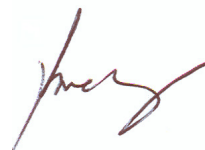
An illness with variable signs and symptoms, but most patients experience fever. Other common symptoms include headache, back pain, chills, sweat, myalgia, nausea and vomiting.

##### *Laboratory Criteria*

Demonstration of malaria parasites in blood films.

Thank you for your continuous support in the prevention and control of communicable diseases.

Yours faithfully,



(Dr. SK CHUANG)  
for Controller, Centre for Health Protection  
Department of Health