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Dear Doctor,

Apparent increase in seasonal influenza activities in Hong Kong

I would like to update you on the latest situation of seasonal influenza activity in the community.

Most recent data from the influenza surveillance systems of the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) showed slightly increased seasonal influenza activities in the community. During the week ending February 27, the average consultation rate for influenza-like illness (ILI) among sentinel private doctors was 55.1 per 1,000 consultations, as compared with 42.8 in the previous week. The number of patients with fever/respiratory symptoms attending Designated Flu Clinics of the Hospital Authority also increased from 410 in the week ending February 20 to 704 in the week ending February 27.

Besides, the number of institutional ILI outbreaks has increased to 28 in the first five days (February 28 – March 4, 2010) of the current week, as compared with three in the week ending February 20 and three in the week ending February 27. About 93% (26/28) of the recently reported ILI outbreaks occurred in school settings, which included 16 primary schools, six kindergartens/child care centres and four secondary schools.

The number of influenza viruses detected from respiratory specimens at the Public Health Laboratory Centre of CHP increased from 44 in the week ending February 20 to 85 in the week ending February 27. In the week ending February 27, the majority of influenza isolates were influenza B virus (63.5%) while HSI virus accounted for 22.4% and influenza A (H3N2) virus about 1% of all isolates. The circulating influenza B virus was mainly B/Victoria/2/87 lineage virus. The currently used seasonal influenza vaccine for the 2009-2010 northern hemisphere influenza season is expected to confer certain cross protection against this influenza B virus. All the influenza B and influenza A (H3N2) viruses tested remained sensitive to oseltamivir (Tamiflu) while only a very small number of HSI virus was resistant to oseltamivir.



CHP will closely monitor the influenza activity in the coming two weeks in order to confirm the arrival of the traditional winter influenza season.

Members of the public are reminded to take the following measures to prevent influenza and other respiratory illnesses:

- To build up good body immunity by having a proper diet, regular exercise and adequate rest, reducing stress and avoiding smoking;
- To maintain good personal and environmental hygiene;
- To wash hands after sneezing, coughing or cleaning the nose;
- To maintain good ventilation; and
- To avoid visiting crowded places with poor ventilation.
- Children with acute febrile illness should not attend school till 48 hours post-defervescence.

You may wish to refer to the Swine and Seasonal Flu Monitor at the CHP website <http://www.chp.gov.hk>. You are also reminded to report respiratory illnesses outbreak occurring in institutional settings to our Central Notification Office (Tel: 2477-2772; Fax: 2477-2770; CENO On-line at <http://www.chp.gov.hk/ceno>) for prompt epidemiological investigations and control measures.

Yours faithfully,



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