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Dear Doctor,

**Increase in Activities of Influenza and Respiratory Viral Infections in
Hong Kong**

Most recent surveillance data showed an increase in influenza activity in Hong Kong, which signals the arrival of the winter influenza season. The Public Health Laboratory Centre (PHLC) of the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) has detected increase in the number of influenza isolations recently. A total of 149 influenza detections were recorded last week (ending January 15, 2011), as compared with 26, 47 and 77 in the weeks ending December 25, 2010, January 1 and January 8, 2011 respectively. The majority (76%) of influenza viruses isolated in the recent two weeks were influenza A (H1N1) 2009 (i.e. human swine influenza), followed by influenza B (12%) and influenza A (H3N2) (12%). The average ILI consultation rate among sentinel private doctors has increased from 43.7 (per 1,000 consultations) in the week ending January 1, 2011 to 47.2 in the ending ending January 8. The corresponding number for general out-patients clinics (GOPCs) has increased from 2.9 to 3.6. The number of ILI outbreaks in institutions/schools has also increased from three in the week ending January 8 to 17 in the week ending January 15.

We also noted an increasing trend in influenza activities in some countries/areas in Europe and North America, indicating that the winter influenza season has already started. Several areas in Asia, including Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore and Japan, have reported slight increases in respiratory disease activity in recent weeks.



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Besides, PHLC has recently detected increases in a number of respiratory viral infections, including Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), parainfluenza virus and adenovirus. The weekly number of RSV detected in PHLC ranged from 44 – 77 in the past eight weeks (November 21, 2010 - January 15, 2011), as compared to 21 - 46 in the previous 8-week period

(September 26 – November 20, 2010). The number of parainfluenza viruses detected in PHLC has increased from 183 in the previous four-week period between November 21 and December 18, 2010 to 228 in the recent four-week period between December 19, 2010 and January 15, 2011. The corresponding number for adenovirus has increased from 319 to 366.

We would like to solicit your support to advise target groups to make use of the last opportunity to receive influenza vaccination as the winter influenza peak is approaching. 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;
- To avoid visiting crowded places with poor ventilation; and
- Children with acute febrile illness should not attend school till 48 hours post-defervescence.

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

Yours faithfully,



(Dr. S K Chuang)

for Controller, Centre for Health Protection
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