

An imported case of Human Swine Influenza (Flu A H1N1)

in Hong Kong

(as at 4 May 2009, 1530 hrs)

Background

- A case of human swine influenza (flu A H1N1) is confirmed in Hong Kong in the evening of 1 May 2009 (local time).
- The patient was a 25-year-old Mexican who arrived Hong Kong on 30 April.
- On 29 April, he took a flight from Mexico to Hong Kong via Shanghai. He arrived Hong Kong at around 1:00 pm on 30 April. He went to the hotel right away and stayed at the hotel until around 8:00 pm when he attended a hospital. He was directly transferred to an isolation ward. He developed fever on 1 May.
- Nasal samples were taken from the patient for test of human swine influenza (flu A H1N1). The samples were confirmed as positive in the evening of 1 May.
- The condition of the patient is stable so far.
- Four persons who have been in close contact with the patient have been tested negative for human swine influenza (flu A H1N1) and are now quarantined.

Immediate Measures Taken

- The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government is taking prompt actions to deal with the emergence of this human swine influenza (flu A H1N1) case.

- As soon as the confirmation of the case, the Government has raised the three-level response system to the highest Emergency Response Level. Steering Committee meetings chaired by the Chief Executive and attended by all relevant Government bureaux and departments have formulated an overall disease control strategy and decided on measures to be taken.

Quarantine measures

- The Centre for Health Protection of Department of Health has taken prompt action to quarantine (for seven days with effect from the evening of 1 May 2009) the hotel guests and staff of the Metropark Hotel in Wanchai where the patient had stayed.
- Some hotel guests who did not wish to stay in the hotel have chosen to stay at one of the Government holiday villages which has been designated as a quarantine centre.
- The Government is providing a full range of support services to the quarantined persons to meet their needs, including provision of food, clothes, entertainment and other daily necessities, free accommodation during the quarantine period, assisting to arrange with airlines for no additional costs for their onward air tickets etc.
- We have informed the relevant Consul Generals in Hong Kong of the details of their nationals staying at the Metropark Hotel.

Tracing of other persons who have been in close contact with the patient

- The 36 passengers sitting in the vicinity of the patient (three rows before and behind) on the same flight from Shanghai and two taxi drivers who have taken the patient have all been traced. All of them who are still in Hong Kong are now being quarantined.

Measures taken at boundary control points

- All travelers entering into Hong Kong via air are required to fill in health declaration form since 30 April. The same arrangements will be fully implemented at land and sea boundary control points within the week.
- Arriving Mexican nationals or travelers who have been to Mexico in the past seven days will be screened at the boundary control points. If they have developed any symptoms of human swine influenza (flu A H1N1), a medical check will be arranged for them.

Local disease control

- The Hospital Authority has activated its emergency response plan. Hospitals are ready for receiving infected or suspected cases.
- The Government has reminded the private healthcare sector to stay vigilant and to report suspected cases as soon as possible.
- The Government has issued hygiene guidelines to the community and stepped up cleansing of public places.

Communication

- We have kept the World Health Organization, Ministry of Health of the People's Republic of China, the health authorities of Guangdong, Shenzhen and Shanghai, and the consulate generals in Hong Kong informed.
- The local media is briefed on a daily basis regarding the latest developments.
- We have stepped up publicity measures to remind the public of the importance of personal and environmental hygiene.
- Department of Health has set up a hotline (852) 2125-1111 for the public to report any suspected cases and to answer enquiries.

Points to Note

- As this is the first confirmed case in the Greater China region and there is still little information about the severeness of the influenza, we need to be very cautious in dealing with the situation. We decided to take comprehensive and stringent measures to prevent any massive outbreak in Hong Kong.
- The quarantine measure is a difficult but necessary decision. If the influenza is spread in Hong Kong, it may take root and result in a massive outbreak. We much appreciate the understanding and the cooperation of all affected persons, and the Government will endeavour to meet their needs during the quarantine period as far as possible.
- Notwithstanding the above, there is no indication of community spread of the influenza in Hong Kong, so there is no reason for panic.
- Schools remain open in Hong Kong.
- All major events, public and social activities will continue, but the public must be vigilant in observing good personal and environmental hygiene.

Food and Health Bureau

4 May 2009