

Legislative Council Panel on Health Services

Inclusion of *Streptococcus suis* infection as a Statutory Notifiable Disease

INTRODUCTION

This paper seeks to inform members of the Administration's proposal to include *Streptococcus suis* infection in the list of statutory notifiable diseases.

PROPOSAL

2. On 1 August 2005, the Director of Health ("the Director"), in exercise of powers conferred by sections 72 and 8(4) of the Quarantine and Prevention of Disease Ordinance (Cap.141) ("the Ordinance"), made –

- (a) the Quarantine and Prevention of Disease Ordinance (Amendment of First Schedule) Order 2005 at Annex A; and
- (b) the Prevention of the Spread of Infectious Diseases Regulations (Amendment of Form) Order 2005 at Annex B.

JUSTIFICATIONS

3. The Ordinance and its subsidiary legislation provide a legislative framework for the prevention of infectious diseases of public health importance. Regulation 4 of the Prevention of the Spread of Infectious Diseases Regulations (Cap. 141 sub. Leg. B) ("the Regulation") requires medical practitioners to notify the Director if they have reason to suspect the existence of any case of the infectious diseases specified in the First Schedule to the Ordinance in a form as prescribed in the Schedule to the Regulations. The reporting of infectious disease cases plays an important role in the surveillance, prevention and control of spread of infectious diseases. The Director regularly reviews the list of infectious diseases statutorily notifiable by medical practitioners in order to ensure maximum protection of the local community against infectious diseases. At present, there are 30 infectious diseases listed in the First Schedule to the Ordinance.

4. *Streptococcus suis* infection is a common infection in pigs. The bacteria is carried in the tonsils of young weaned pigs, and spread among pigs by nose-to-nose contact or by aerosol over short distances. Human infection by

Streptococcus suis occurs mainly in healthy adults and is often related to occupational exposure through cutaneous portal of entry, such as cuts or abrasions while handling infected pig carcasses. Common occupations at risk include pig breeders, abattoirs workers, meat processing and transport workers, butchers, and cooks. *Streptococcus suis* infection is a notifiable occupational disease under the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance in Hong Kong. From 1994 to 2004, a total of seven cases of occupational *Streptococcus suis* infection were confirmed by the Occupational Health Service of the Labour Department.

5. Upon enhancing the communicable disease surveillance system in May 2004, the Department of Health (DH) started to receive reports on sporadic cases of *Streptococcus suis* infection. From May 2004 to end of July 2005, a total of 11 cases have been received and investigated by DH. Among these, only four have reported occupational exposure. The remaining seven did not report definite exposure to pigs or raw pork. These findings suggested that *Streptococcus suis* infection may occur in healthy adults without definite exposure history.

6. *Streptococcus suis* infection has the potential of causing outbreaks in the human population having close contact with sick pigs. It is exemplified by the recent outbreak occurring in the Sichuan Province in the Mainland which is evolving at a rapid pace and to an unprecedented scale. According to the Ministry of Health, the outbreak started on 24 June 2005. The affected patients had acute onset of high fever, headache, and septicaemia. More severe cases presented with septicaemic shock and meningitis. As of 31 July 2005, the total affected were 181 cases, with 34 deaths. This alerts us the possibility of *Streptococcus suis* infection causing major outbreaks in human population and resulting in mortality.

7. Hong Kong is an international hub with a lot of traffic and visitors. Hong Kong needs to have good baseline data on *Streptococcus suis* infection to enable the health authority to better understand the epidemiology of the disease in Hong Kong, identify possible abnormal clustering or outbreaks, and implement control measures in a timely manner for public health protection. In the present situation, mandatory reporting of all cases of *Streptococcus suis* infection will enable the Department to assess the size and scale of the disease locally, and to inform health protection policies.

THE ORDERS

8. The Quarantine and Prevention of Disease Ordinance (Amendment of First Schedule) Order 2005 amends the First Schedule to the Ordinance by adding *Streptococcus suis* infection to the list of infectious diseases specified in that Schedule. The Prevention of the Spread of Infectious Diseases Regulations (Amendment of Form) Order 2005 amends Form 2 of the

Schedule to the Regulations by adding *Streptococcus suis* to the list of infectious diseases in that Form. The Orders will come into operation on 2 August 2005 upon gazettal.

LEGISLATIVE TIMETABLE

9. The legislative timetable is as follows –

Publication in the Gazette	2 August 2005
Tabling at Legislative Council	12 October 2005

IMPLICATIONS OF THE ORDERS

10. The Orders are in conformity with the Basic Law, including the provisions concerning human rights. They will not affect the current binding effect of the Ordinance and have no economic, financial and civil service implications.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

11. In view of the need for timeliness of the matter, no public consultation has been conducted.

PUBLICITY

12. The inclusion of *Streptococcus suis* infection as a statutory notifiable disease was announced in a press conference earlier today. DH has also informed the medical practitioners individually including those in the Hospital Authority of the requirement to notify the Director of cases of *Streptococcus suis*. In addition, CHP will widely inform healthcare providers from both the public and private sectors, as well as academic and other experts regarding the strengthening of surveillance for *Streptococcus suis* infection through letters and publications. A spokesman from DH will be available to answer media enquiries.

OTHERS

13. For any enquiries on this brief, please contact Dr Teresa CHOI, Principal Medical and Health Officer (Surveillance Section) of the CHP at 2768 9602.

14. This paper is for members' information.

**QUARANTINE AND PREVENTION OF DISEASE
ORDINANCE (AMENDMENT OF FIRST
SCHEDULE) ORDER 2005**

(Made by the Director of Health under section 72 of the Quarantine
and Prevention of Disease Ordinance (Cap. 141))

1. Infectious diseases

The First Schedule to the Quarantine and Prevention of Disease Ordinance
(Cap. 141) is amended by adding –

“19B. *Streptococcus suis* infection”.



Director of Health

/ August 2005

Explanatory Note

This Order adds *Streptococcus suis* infection to the list of infectious diseases specified in the First Schedule to the Quarantine and Prevention of Disease Ordinance (Cap. 141). Provisions relating to infectious diseases in that Ordinance and in the Prevention of the Spread of Infectious Diseases Regulations (Cap. 141 sub. leg. B) therefore apply to this disease.

**PREVENTION OF THE SPREAD OF INFECTIOUS
DISEASES REGULATIONS (AMENDMENT
OF FORM) ORDER 2005**

(Made by the Director of Health under section 8(4) of the Quarantine
and Prevention of Disease Ordinance (Cap. 141))

1. Forms

The Schedule to the Prevention of the Spread of Infectious Diseases
Regulations (Cap. 141 sub. leg. B) is amended, in Form 2, by adding before

“ Tetanus” –

“ *Streptococcus suis* infection”.



Director of Health

/ August 2005

Explanatory Note

This Order adds *Streptococcus suis* infection to Form 2 of the Schedule to the Prevention of the Spread of Infectious Diseases Regulations (Cap. 141 sub. leg. B) in consequence of this disease being added as an infectious disease to the First Schedule to the Quarantine and Prevention of Disease Ordinance (Cap. 141). Medical practitioners are required to report suspected cases of this disease to the Director of Health in accordance with that Form under regulation 4 of the Regulations.