

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL BRIEF

Quarantine and Prevention of Disease Ordinance

(Chapter 141)

QUARANTINE AND PREVENTION OF DISEASE ORDINANCE

(AMENDMENT OF FIRST SCHEDULE) ORDER 1998

PREVENTION OF THE SPREAD OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES

REGULATIONS (AMENDMENT OF FORM) ORDER 1998

INTRODUCTION

The Quarantine and Prevention of Disease Ordinance (“the Ordinance”) provides for the quarantine and prevention of diseases among human beings.

2. The Ordinance empowers the Director of Health (“the Director”) to amend the First Schedule to the Ordinance and any form prescribed under section 8 of the Ordinance.

3. A “chickenpox” vaccine was licensed in Hong Kong and used by private doctors. The Director considers it necessary to add “chickenpox” to the list of infectious diseases specified in the First Schedule to the Ordinance so that the Department of Health (“the Department”) can monitor the impact of such vaccination on the occurrence of “chickenpox” in the local community. This would help the Department to plan future prevention and control strategies for

this disease. It is also necessary to add “chickenpox” to the relevant prescribed form of notification.

BACKGROUND AND ARGUMENT

4. The Ordinance and its subsidiary legislation provide a legislative framework for the prevention of communicable diseases of public health importance. Regulation 4 of the Prevention of the Spread of Infectious Diseases Regulations (“the Regulations”) (Cap. 141 sub. leg.) requires medical practitioners to notify the Director of the existence of any 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 diseases is an important element to the surveillance, control and prevention of outbreak of infectious diseases. As a matter of routine, the list of infectious diseases required to be so notified by medical practitioners is regularly reviewed to enhance surveillance of infectious diseases.

5. A “chickenpox” vaccine was licensed in Hong Kong in 1996 and some private doctors have used it to vaccinate children. The Advisory Committee on Immunisation (ACI) has met and discussed the usefulness of this new vaccine and came to a conclusion that it has not yet been appropriate to introduce “chickenpox” vaccine into the routine immunisation programme of Hong Kong. However, the ACI recommended that “chickenpox” should be added to the list of infectious diseases specified in the First Schedule to the Ordinance so that the Department could monitor the occurrence and complication of “chickenpox”, and assess the impact of the “chickenpox” vaccination on local disease pattern. The data is useful for planning future prevention and control strategies.

6. The Director has now exercised her power in accordance with sections 72 and 8(4) of the Ordinance to amend the First Schedule to the Ordinance and Form 2 in the Schedule to the Regulations respectively by making the Quarantine and Prevention of Disease Ordinance (Amendment of First Schedule) Order 1998 and the Prevention of the Spread of Infectious Diseases Regulations (Amendment of Form) Order 1998.

THE AMENDMENT ORDERS

7. A copy of the Quarantine and Prevention of Disease Ordinance (Amendment of First Schedule) Order 1998 and Prevention of the Spread of Infectious Diseases Regulations (Amendment of Form) Order 1998 are at Annexes A and B. The first Order amends the First Schedule to the Ordinance by adding “chickenpox” to the list of infectious diseases specified in that Schedule. The second Order amends Form 2 of the Schedule to the Regulations by adding “chickenpox” to the list of infectious diseases in that Form.

8. We propose to bring the 2 Orders into operation on 1 February 1999. This will allow sufficient time for medical practitioners to be familiar with the new requirement and for the Department to distribute new forms to relevant persons.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

9. The amendments have the support of the Advisory Committee on Immunisation which comprises eminent members of the medical profession from Hospital Authority hospitals, the universities, the Department and private practising experts.

FINANCIAL AND STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

10. There would not be any financial and staffing implications arising from the inclusion of “chickenpox” in the infectious disease surveillance system.

PUBLICITY

11. The 2 Orders will be gazetted on 13 November 1998. The Department will inform members of the profession through various professional bodies like the Hong Kong Medical Association by late November 1998. An announcement will also be made on the Public Health and Epidemiology Bulletin, which is the official publication of the Department, and other relevant professional publications.

ENQUIRY

12. For any enquiries on this brief, please contact Miss Winnie TSE of the Health and Welfare Bureau on 2973 8120.

Health and Welfare Bureau
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