

**For information on  
17 November 2004**

## **Legislative Council Panel on Health Services**

### **The outbreak of respiratory illness in the Developmental Disability Unit of the Caritas Medical Centre**

#### **Purpose**

This paper sets out the sequence of events related to the outbreak of respiratory illness in the Developmental Disability Unit of the Caritas Medical Centre.

#### **Background**

2. Wai Yee Block of the Caritas Medical Centre (CMC) was a block for the Developmental Disability Unit (DDU) of its Paediatrics Department. It consists of 4 floors. The unit provides long-term residential care for severely mentally handicapped children. Most of the inpatients are totally dependent and many have congenital and multiple medical problems. Fever and respiratory symptoms among these inpatients are quite common, with a baseline of about 0-2 children developing fever within the same 24-hour period.

#### **Sequence of events**

##### 7pm November 11

3. The Infection Control Nurse of CMC notified the Centre for Health Protection of the outbreak. Investigation was carried out. A total of 18 children (14 from Ward Wai Yee 1 and 4 from Wai Yee 3<sup>1</sup>) developed fever and respiratory symptoms from November 5 to November 11. Advice was given to CMC regarding isolation of cases, cohorting of exposed patients and staff and restriction of visitors. CMC

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<sup>1</sup> Ward Wai Yee is on the first floor of Wai Yee Block whereas Wai Yee 3 is on the third.

was also advised to alert parents of other inpatients of the whole Wai Yee Block, and advise them to contact CHP if they developed fever or respiratory symptoms. Moreover, CHP would conduct medical surveillance of the visitors (which included parents) and discharged patients.

#### November 12

4. CHP met the hospital management and conducted site visit to the affected wards. CHP also attended the CMC Hospital Outbreak Control Team meeting, chaired by the Hospital Chief Executive (HCE), CMC.

5. CHP also visited the special school and put the staff under medical surveillance. It was learned that all patients from Wai Yee 1 and Wai Yee 3 had stopped attending school since November 11. CHP advised the school to suspend classes from November 13 onwards.

6. Nasopharyngeal aspirate (NPAs) taken from 15 cases for influenza A, Influenza B and RSV showed negative results to quick tests. Bacterial cultures of sputum of 6 cases showed negative results.

7. A press release was issued by CHP concerning this outbreak.

8. Four more cases developed (all from Wai Yee 1) developed fever and respiratory symptoms. (*Total 22 cases, 18 from Wai Yee 1 and 4 from Wai Yee 3*)

#### November 13

9. The Infection Control Branch of CHP attended the CMC Hospital Outbreak Control Team meeting, chaired by HCE of CMC.

10. Two more cases from Wai Yee 1 with onset of symptoms occurred.

11. NPAs taken (on November 11 and 12) from 19 cases from influenza A, B, parainfluenza, Respiratory Syncytial Virus, adenovirus and SARS-coronavirus all showed negative results on quick tests. Sputum culture of the first case grew the presence of *Strep. pneumoniae*.

#### November 14

12. Three more cases (two from Wai Yee 1 and one from Wai Yee 3)

with onset of symptoms occurred. (*Total 27 cases: 22 from Wai Yee 1 and 5 from Wai Yee 3*).

13. The condition of a boy from Wai Yee 1, with fever onset on 12 November, deteriorated and required intubation and ventilation support. He was transferred to the Intensive Care Unit of CMC on the same day.

#### November 15

14. CHP attended the CMC Hospital Outbreak Control Team meeting, chaired by HCE, CMC. It was agreed that all the cases would be isolated in Paediatric ward 9B. The hospital would issue green alert. All admissions to the Paediatric Wards would be stopped. Visitors to the DDU would be restricted to close relatives with full Personal Protective Equipment. A telephone hotline was set up in CMC to answer enquires.

15. A joint press conference was conducted by Hospital Authority and CHP.

16. One more case from Wai Yee 1 with onset of symptoms occurred. (*Total 28 cases: 23 from Wai Yee 1 and 5 from Wai Yee 3*).

17. It was found that two staff (one registered nurse and one health care assistant) from Wai Yee 3 developed fever and respiratory symptoms on November 7 and 13 respectively.

#### **Way Forward**

18. The Centre for Health Protection will -

- (a) continue its close liaison with its Public Health Laboratory Service Branch (PHLSB) and the Laboratory of the University of Hong Kong to identify the causative agent; and
- (b) continue medical surveillance of all the inpatients, discharged patients, staff and visitors of the affected wards.

19. Members are invited to note the above sequence of events and the actions to be taken by CHP (paragraph 18 above).

Surveillance and Epidemiology Branch  
Centre for Health Protection  
Department of Health  
November 2004