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Dear Doctor,

### Vigilance against yellow fever

We would like to draw your attention to the ongoing outbreak of yellow fever in Angola.

Yellow fever is endemic in tropical areas of Africa and Latin America. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), an outbreak of yellow fever started on 5 December 2015 in Luanda province of Angola. As of 21 March, a total of 1 132 suspected and confirmed cases and 168 deaths had been reported in Angola. The outbreak is ongoing. In addition, from 13 to 20 March 2016, a total of five imported cases of yellow fever from Angola were also reported in Mainland China.

Yellow fever is an acute infection caused by the yellow fever virus. The virus mainly infects monkeys and humans and is transmitted via the bite of infected mosquitoes, primarily *Aedes aegypti*. The incubation period is about 3 to 6 days. The majority of persons infected with yellow fever virus have no symptoms or only mild illness. Some people may develop sudden onset of fever, chills, headache, muscle pain, nausea and vomiting. Most patients improve and their symptoms usually disappear after 3 – 4 days after onset. However, about 15% of the symptomatic cases will progress to a more severe form of the disease characterised by high fever, jaundice, bleeding, and eventually shock and failure of multiple organs. Fatality rate among severe cases is about 20 – 50%.

In Hong Kong, *Aedes aegypti*, the primary vector for the transmission of yellow fever, is not present. The risk of local spread of yellow fever is relatively low. However, due to the large volume of international travel, there is risk of importation of yellow fever into Hong Kong.



There is no specific drug treatment for yellow fever. Management is mainly for symptomatic relief. Prevention of the yellow fever is by avoidance of mosquito bites and vaccination when travelling to and from endemic countries and areas.

The WHO recommends immunisation for all travellers aged 9 months and above, travelling to and from at-risk areas, unless they are contraindicated for vaccination. Travellers who are vaccinated against yellow fever will be given an International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis. The certificate is valid for life from 10 days after the injection. It takes 10 days for the vaccine to become effective in providing good protection, hence adequate time should be allowed for vaccination before departure.

In Hong Kong, the vaccine is available in our Travel Health Centres. In order to avoid unnecessary delay in receiving yellow fever vaccination, travellers are advised to make an appointment with Travel Health Centres at least 6 weeks before travel. More information can be found at the Travel Health Service website at <http://www.travelhealth.gov.hk/eindex.html>.

Some countries require proof of yellow fever vaccination as a condition of entry or transit for travellers arriving from certain countries. A list of countries with risk of yellow fever transmission and countries requiring yellow fever vaccination can be found on WHO website at <http://www.who.int/ith/2016-ith-annex1.pdf?ua=1>.

Medical practitioners should be aware of the possibility of yellow fever for travellers returning from affected areas and present with clinically compatible picture. If you encounter patients with a clinically compatible illness with relevant travel history, please report to the Central Notification Office (CENO) of CHP via fax (2477 2770), CENO On-line ([https://cdis.chp.gov.hk/CDIS\\_CENO\\_ONLINE/ceno.html](https://cdis.chp.gov.hk/CDIS_CENO_ONLINE/ceno.html)) or phone (2477 2772) for investigation and control measures.

Please draw the attention of the healthcare professionals and supporting staff in your institution/ working with you to the above. Thank you for your continuous support in combating infectious diseases.

Yours faithfully,



(Dr. SK CHUANG)

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