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各安老院的經營者／主管：

及早檢測冠狀病毒

食物及衛生局局長就題述事宜致函各安老院經營者及殘疾人士院舍營辦人，本署現轉交該信函，供各院舍參閱。

如有查詢，請致電 2125 1111 或 2125 1122 與衛生署衛生防護中心聯絡。

社會福利署署長

(黃鎮標 已簽署 代行)

副本送：

勞工及福利局首席助理秘書長 (福利) 3
衛生署助理署長 (長者健康)
衛生署感染控制處主任
醫院管理局總行政經理 (基層及社區醫療服務)
香港社會服務聯會業務總監
香港安老服務協會主席
全港私營安老院同業會主席
中小企國際聯盟安老及殘疾服務聯會主席
香港買位安老服務議會主席
社會福利署助理署長 (牌照及規管)
社會福利署助理署長 (安老服務)
社會福利署各區福利專員
總社會工作主任 (津貼)
總社會工作主任 (合約管理)
總社會工作主任 (安老服務) 2

2020 年 4 月 17 日



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部食物及衛生局
Food and Health Bureau, Government Secretariat
The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

本函檔號 Our Ref: FHB/H/16/123/

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17 April 2020

Dear Operators of Residential Care Homes for the Elderly and Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities / Managers,

Early testing for coronavirus

Overview

As I write, the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic that has caused havoc across the globe seems to have reduced its threat to Hong Kong for the moment. From the worrying peak of 50+ new confirmed cases a day in late March, we have just experienced for five days in a row reports of only five or less new cases a day.

2. The number of **imported** COVID-19 cases has dropped considerably, reflecting partly a dramatic reduction in the number of inbound arrivals, from some 15,000 a day in the mid-March to mostly under 500 a day in the airport in the past week. The number of **local** cases has also receded, thanks to the community-wide effort to adhere to masking, observance of hand and personal hygiene and social distancing.

3. That said, we are wary that the COVID-19 transmission chains may still be lurking around. Some COVID-19 infected people could be **asymptomatic** and could well be exposing high-risk groups like elders and persons with disabilities (PWDs) to the disease. Testing for COVID-19 therefore remains a core component in our sustained fight against the disease.

Testing through PHLC

4. In case you are not aware, the Public Health Laboratory Centre (PHLC) under the Department of Health (DH) has been administering free COVID-19 tests for targeted groups like close contacts of confirmed cases, confinees in quarantine camps, passengers on the World Dream cruises, etc. PHLC has also developed an open network with all private medical practitioners who can arrange – either through their established partnering laboratories or directly with PHLC, for their patients to be tested for COVID-19 (so-called Tier 5 enhanced surveillance). To facilitate the return of specimens, PHLC has arranged collection points at 13 DH outlets. Two member companies of the Cyberport Start-up Alumni Associations, namely GoGoVan and HK Pick-Up Limited provide pick-up and delivery services at a fee to patients who have been arranged with COVID-19 testing by private doctors under the Enhanced Laboratory Surveillance Programme. As of 15 April 2020, about 86 COVID-19 cases had been detected via Tier 5 surveillance, giving a positive rate of about 1.29%.

5. Since 19 March 2020, PHLC has further rolled out by phases testing to all asymptomatic inbound travelers (so-called Tier 6 enhanced surveillance). Under this scheme, as of 15 April 2020, 229 tests conducted have been positive, giving a positive rate of 1.01%.

Protecting the More Vulnerable

6. Given frailties, disabilities and/or underlying health complications of elders and PWDs, they are more susceptible than other groups to the serious health hazards or even casualties posed by COVID-19. I write therefore to appeal to you, as operators of Residential Care Homes for the Elderly and Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities, to try your very best to protect the elderly and PWDs under your care from the threats of the novel coronavirus.

7. In case you or your team identify fever, respiratory or other symptoms amongst your clients, please consult a doctor as soon as possible. If testing for COVID-19 is considered by the doctor to be relevant, please note that PHLC offers free testing service for private doctors, on top of the testing service also available in Hospital Authority (HA) settings (for in-patients as well as out-

patients).

8. Please make reference to the Guidelines for Residential Care Homes for the Elderly or Persons with Disabilities for the Prevention of COVID-19 (Interim) published by the Centre for Health Protection of DH.

Protecting Frontline Service Providers

9. As guardian of the health for your clients, you and your colleagues also deserve our care and support. In the event that you or your colleagues do not feel well, please refrain from your usual duties immediately, and seek a medical consultation. Note also that COVID-19 test may be arranged, subject to the professional judgement of the medical practitioner.

Testing, testing, testing

10. As we soldier on in this fight against COVID-19, DH and its PHLC as well as HA are prepared to continue stretching their testing capacities to the limit. We are prepared to support more tests for elders, PWDs and related service providers.

11. All said, we are here to serve. Testing is available. Please contact your visiting medical team or call DH for enquiries.

Yours faithfully,



(Prof. Sophia Siu Chee CHAN)
Secretary for Food and Health