

"Third wave" of COVID-19 Pandemic in Hong Kong

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COVID-19 pandemic seems to be stabilized during the previous month with no local case and foreign input cases only. However, there was a 59-year-old chef local case discovered in Kwun Tong Hong Kong on the 6th of July recently. He has been identified as the 1,269th patient infected with COVID-19, no travel history and a serious number of infected cases proportionally increased later on. The number of local confirmed cases become more than double in a week from the 6th to 12th of July¹ (Figure I). Is this “community outbreak”? The third wave of COVID-19 epidemic in Hong Kong.

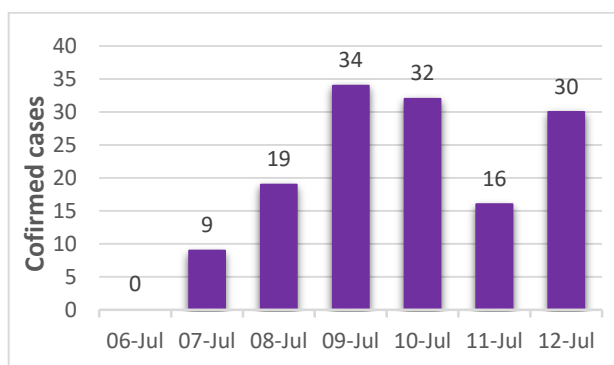


Figure I: The number of local confirmed cases in Hong Kong from the 6th to 12th of July. (Data collected and analysed from the Centre for Health Protection, Department of Health, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region)

Any corresponding health policy be implemented? In early 29th of March 2020, the Hong Kong Chief Executive and its Council were legislated "Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation", from the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Cap. 599) under

section 8². It's including group gathering can't more than 50 persons and four persons only for meal per table. The table should be separated by at least 1.5 meters or blocked by a clapboard to keep a social distance and must wear a mask when taking public transportation. These are focusing on the COVID-19 infection chain-breaking. Based on the confirmed case, it has been indicated that the indoor spread of SARS-CoV-2 in a restaurant is indisputable as the transmission of COVID-19 via respiratory droplets within a short distance of 2 m and human-to-human transmission or by contaminated surfaces leading to infection through contact³. If air is not circulating and the place is crowded, its virus easily existing in the air and infected to the respiratory tract for replication. Although the restaurant has a clapboard to isolate customers from each other, this is not enough to block the spread of the virus, so it's better to take away and reduce eating out. On the 13th of July, the Hong Kong government tighten the regulation with effective from 15th of July e.g. group gathering must less than 20 persons, and ban the dining for anyone in catering industry after six o'clock at night. It's further measures and to be adopted to maintain social distancing⁴.

Besides, there were several infection cases with no clinical symptoms in homes for the aged. As the elderly immune system normally is not good, so when visitors and staffs infected with COVID-19, it increases the risk of infection to other elderly especially underlying medical conditions consist of chronic lung disease, immunocompromising conditions and diabetes. This must break the continuous infection chain, e.g. personal hygiene and maintain a physical distance for the elderly,

otherwise, the aged centre would be a small outbreak⁵.

According to the re-emerge infection cases in the past week, asymptomatic patients may have existed and its latent period is around 14 days or imported the infection cases. Therefore, some infection sources of COVID-19 cannot be found and tracked. The transmission chain of COVID-19 has never been broken and its pandemic rebound again in Hong Kong. Everyone should be vigilant, pay more attention to the rules of social distance and personal hygiene, do not slacken to fight against COVID-19. The SARS-CoV-2 in COVID-19 would become difficult to measure because of the mutation, it has a higher transmission rate from human-to-human. If ignored these prevention and control guidelines of COVID-19, Hong Kong will face more challenges after the following days, more infection and confirmed cases appeared.

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