Advice and Updates on COVID-19

20 May 2020

According to prevailing studies, the mean incubation period of COVID-19 is around 5-6 days\(^1\), with 99% of cases not exceeding 14 days. WHO and local experts\(^3,4,5\) suggest that counting of twice the length of the maximum incubation period since the last local diagnosed case can be a reasonable time to expect an interruption of human-to-human transmission. Therefore, zero local infection for 28 days is commonly considered as a relatively prudent indication of an end of local transmission of COVID-19.

Regrettably, after the 23rd day in row recorded no new local confirmed COVID-19 cases, few new confirmed cases emerged on 13 May 2020. Since 31 December 2019, the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health has recorded a total of 1056 cases of COVID-19, including 1055 confirmed cases and 1 probable case as of 19 May 2020. Having said that, life has to go on. As advised by two experts Professor Gabriel Leung (Dean of Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine of the University of Hong Kong) and Professor Yuen Kwok-yung (Chair of Infectious Diseases, Department of Microbiology, Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine of the University of Hong Kong), also members of the advisory group appointed by the Government, people have to learn and get prepared to co-exist with COVID-19. So long as the general public can unite together, stay vigilant and maintain at all times strict personal and environmental hygiene, we can anticipate the time for full recovery of normal activities to come soon.

We are pleased to see the situation is alleviated along with the Government’s implementation of various stringent anti-epidemic measures, such as the (a) set-up of the Temporary Specimen Collection Centre (臨時樣本採集中心) at the AsiaWorld-Expo for collection of deep throat saliva samples of asymptomatic inbound travelers arriving at the Airport; and the Holding Centre for Test Result (等候檢測結果中心) at Regal Oriental Hotel to accommodate their need to wait for COVID-19 test results; (b) operation of quarantine centres to accommodate people who are close contacts of confirmed cases, and people who come back to Hong Kong from Mainland/overseas countries after risk assessment but without compatible symptoms for compulsory quarantine; (c) public education on enhancing personal and environmental hygiene; and (d) group gathering requirement, etc. In view of the low number of imported cases and few new confirmed cases emerged, the CHP has relieved some of its control measures after careful consideration by allowing gradual resumption of normal activities in the community. Similarly, taking into account the welfare and well-being of our community, it is necessary for us to gradually reinstate regular dental service and
manage oral diseases for maintenance of oral health within society.

Our profession has been exhibiting great commitment in combating COVID-19 while continued to maintain the community’s dental health during the pandemic. Our effort and measures taken are proved to be effective to safeguard the safety of our staff members and patients. We need to position ourselves ready to resume our service normal whenever conditions allow. At this crucial moment, we will carry on our coping with the challenging situation and applying of our professional knowledge to identify risks and make proper clinical judgement for early resumption of regular dental services while ensuring adequate protections for ourselves and our patients.

Precautions that we previously strengthened to prevent infections will still be strictly followed. These include tight triage measures, strict adherence to standard precautions, with particular attention to limit droplets and aerosols transmission, in addition to vigorous disinfection procedures.

Close monitoring of the local and global development of the pandemic will be kept to guide our judgement in clinical management. We assure you further updates in case of changes in the situation. Let’s stay united for a better tomorrow.

**References**

1. Early Transmission Dynamics in Wuhan, China, of Novel Coronavirus–Infected Pneumonia - Qun Li et al., New England Journal of Medicine, Jan. 29, 2020
4. K. Park, Park’s Textbook of Preventive and Social Medicine 22nd Ed., p.132