

Public Health Wales Briefing: Cluster of pneumonia of unknown aetiology in Wuhan City, China

Date of briefing: 8 January 2020

Intended audience:

- PHW Health Protection Teams
- PHW CDSC consultants and senior scientists, for dissemination to teams as appropriate
- Microbiologists (Public Health Wales and other)
- Health Board Directors of Public Health and Medical Directors for dissemination to Emergency departments and Acute medical departments.
- Executive Nurse Directors, Senior Nurses/ Leads of Infection Prevention and Control
- Welsh Government

1. Background and interpretation:

On 31 December 2019, WHO was informed by the People's Republic of China of cases of pneumonia of unknown microbial aetiology associated with Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. Some but not all cases were associated with Wuhan South China Seafood City market, which sells meat, poultry and seafood. At the last report to WHO on 03 January 2020, there were 44 cases of which 11 were reported as severely ill.

A Wuhan Municipal Health Commission update on 05 January 2020 reported 59 cases, including 7 critically ill patients, with no deaths. The first case became unwell on 12 December 2019 and the onset date of the last case was 29 December 2019. Current reports describe no evidence of significant human-to-human transmission, including no infections of healthcare workers. Cases of pneumonia possibly linked to Wuhan City have been assessed in Hong Kong.

Limited clinical information available suggests some cases have bilateral pulmonary infiltrates. Wuhan Health Commission report that influenza, adenovirus, SARS-CoV and MERS-CoV have been ruled out. Investigations for other pathogens continue. It is possible that this cluster represents the emergence of a novel pathogen.

Although the cluster in Wuhan City is not due to avian influenza, according to current reports, avian influenza has been reported in this region and it remains a possibility in returning travellers from Wuhan City.

This is an evolving situation and further updates will be provided. ***This briefing is adapted from PHE Briefing Note 2020/002, Cluster of pneumonia of unknown aetiology in Wuhan City, China, issued 7/1/2020.***

2. Recommendations and actions

Implications and recommendations for clinical microbiology, virology and infectious diseases services:

PHW and NHS microbiology/virology/ID services should communicate the information in this briefing note appropriately within their Trust, including with Emergency Departments and acute medical services. Patients who present with pneumonia and have travelled to China in the 14 days prior to onset of symptoms should have a detailed travel and exposure history taken.

For all patients who have pneumonia with onset within 14 days after travel to Wuhan City:

If avian influenza risk factors are present, follow usual protocols for suspected avian influenza and **in addition** contact Public Health Wales Virology, UHW, to discuss additional testing. Notify the local Health Protection Team: **AWAre** I&S. A link to the Public Health England guidance on Avian influenza: guidance for managing human cases is in the further information section below.

If avian influenza risk factors are not present: The patient should be managed in respiratory isolation, using the local personal protective equipment protocol for airborne infections, incorporating a fit-tested FFP3 mask and eye protection. Cleaning of patient areas should also be undertaken in the same PPE. Local standard microbiology testing, including testing of upper and lower respiratory tract samples where feasible, should be undertaken in containment level 3. This should include at minimum testing for influenza and *Legionella pneumophila*. Reserve a portion of all samples where possible and contact **AWAre, telephone:** I&S

The Health Protection team may be contacted about patients with pneumonia who have travelled to Wuhan City especially with the Chinese New Year at the end of this month. They should advise the clinician to take a detailed travel and exposure history and to follow the recommendations for clinical services. On receipt of calls, record dates of travel, details of the return flight to the UK, presence of any avian influenza risk factors and contact with human cases of severe respiratory illness.

The Public Health England [Reporting form for suspected human cases of avian influenza](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/806504/influ_a_Casereportform230707.pdf) can be found at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/806504/influ_a_Casereportform230707.pdf [accessed 8 January 2020 last updated 23/07/2007]

3. Further information:

The Chinese New Year falls on 25th January and ends on 8th February 2020. This year is the Year of the Rat.

There are several direct flights each week to Wuhan City from London Heathrow Airport.

The potential health risks will vary between individuals depending on the amount of time spent in China, the areas being visited and leisure pursuits undertaken. Risk factors such as age, pre-existing health conditions, medications and pregnancy should be taken into account during a travel consultation.

Travellers are advised that, although human cases of avian influenza are rare, visitors to China should avoid exposure to wild birds and poultry.

Information and advice on travel to China, and the risks posed by avian influenza, is available to view on the following websites:

- <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/>,
- <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/outbreaks>
- [fitfortravel \(www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk\)](http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk).

WHO: Disease outbreak news <https://www.who.int/csr/don/05-january-2020-pneumonia-of-unkown-cause-china/en/>

Wuhan Municipal Health Commission (Chinese)

<http://wjw.wuhan.gov.cn/front/web/showDetail/2020010509020>

PHE Avian influenza: guidance for managing human cases

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/avian-influenza-guidance-and-algorithms-for-managing-human-cases>