

Parallel Session

PS4.3 Food Poisoning

14:30 Theatre 2

Investigation and Management of Food Poisoning Outbreak

Low K

Centre for Food Safety, Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

In Hong Kong, food poisoning is a statutory notifiable disease under the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Cap. 599). Notification is largely made by healthcare professionals of both private and public sectors. In case the general public becomes ill after patronising a food premises, complaint can be lodged via the government hotline “1823”. The Centre for Health Protection will then conduct epidemiologic investigation promptly. Suspected food poisoning outbreaks involving food premises will be followed up by the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) for subsequent management and control measures to protect the public.

The CFS will mount a field investigation to identify probable sources and contributing factors of the outbreak as soon as possible. Collection of relevant food and environmental specimens as well as appropriate clinical specimens from food handlers will be performed. In parallel, tracing back and forward of any incriminated food or its ingredients at risk will be conducted. Specific advice on food hygiene together with actions against any irregularities identified during the course of investigation will be carried out to reduce the risk of future outbreaks.

Over the past few years, the investigation of the CFS showed that the common causative agents related to food poisoning in Hong Kong included bacteria (e.g. vibrio parahaemolyticus, salmonella, staphylococcus aureus, etc.); viruses (e.g. norovirus); natural toxins (e.g. ciguatoxin, tetrodotoxin, shell toxins, mushroom toxins, etc.), and chemicals (e.g. pesticides, calcium oxalate). Bacterial food poisoning constituted around 80% of all the outbreak cases.

Support from clinicians and the general public in providing information is essential for the food poisoning investigation which allows subsequent control measures to be carried out in a timely and efficient manner.