



For Immediate Release

HKSH Allergy Centre Launches Pre-vaccination Screening Service to Enhance Safety for COVID-19 Vaccination

(18 February 2021, Hong Kong) HKSH Allergy Centre has launched a new pre-vaccination allergy screening service to provide care for patients and members of the public who have a history of drug or vaccine allergy.

The service is intended to meet the needs and concerns of the public as vaccines against COVID-19, according to latest government announcement, will soon arrive at Hong Kong. The injection schedules for the vaccines require each person to receive two injections of the vaccine separated by a few weeks.

Anti-COVID-19 is the first vaccination programme targeting the entire population in Hong Kong which is a welcome development in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. HKSH Allergy Centre is pleased to be able to offer Pre-vaccination Screening Service for the screening of vaccine allergy in those who are at risk.

“Health authorities worldwide acknowledge that the risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19 outweighs the risk of developing anaphylaxis after vaccination,” said **the Director of Allergy Centre, Dr. LEE Tak-hong**. “Nonetheless some individuals having a past history of allergies are sufficiently fearful of developing severe reactions that they refuse vaccination.”

Based on international guidelines which have been adapted for Hong Kong, the Pre-vaccination Screening Service will help enhance vaccine safety for those with a history of drug or vaccine allergy.

Patients will be required to complete a questionnaire to evaluate their history of drug/ vaccine allergy, and those with risks of allergy will be referred to and advised by an Allergist/Immunologist to undergo a series of screening tests, including skin prick and/or intradermal injections of diluted and safe doses of substances containing excipients commonly used in vaccines.

The service will advise patients under what circumstances they can have their first injection containing a particular excipient, and/or their second injection if they had experienced a reaction after their first dose.

“The cause of the severe allergy following COVID-19 vaccination is unknown and there is no precedent as these mRNA vaccines are new. Historically, reactions to other vaccines are seldom caused by the active ingredients. Instead, inactive ingredients, such as the excipients polyethylene glycol (PEG) and polysorbates added to improve solubility, are the commonest causes of reactions,” Dr. LEE explained.

Over recent years, excipients have been recognised as hidden allergens that may be causing repeated reactions in patients with hitherto undiagnosed severe allergic reactions to multiple classes of drugs. These excipients are not only found in vaccines, but also in injections used for common procedures such as endoscopy and contrast imaging, and even some cosmetic products. The Pre-vaccination Screening Service is also helpful to advise patients who may be at risk of an allergic reaction when undergoing other clinical procedures.

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HKSH Medical Group

Officially launched in September 2017, promotes public health and advanced medicine through a multi-faceted, coordinated approach in clinical services, medical education, scientific research and public health education. Members of the Group, including Hong Kong Sanatorium & Hospital, HKSH Healthcare HKSH Eastern Medical Centre, are dedicated to offering top-quality holistic care to patients, upholding the motto “Quality in Service, Excellence in Care”.

Hong Kong Sanatorium & Hospital

Hong Kong Sanatorium & Hospital is one of the leading private hospitals in Hong Kong. With the motto “Quality in Service Excellence in Care”, the Hospital is committed to serving the public as well as promoting medical education and research.

Allergy Centre

The Allergy Centre at Hong Kong Sanatorium & Hospital was established in March 2012. It was the first time such a Centre had been created in a private and public hospital in Hong Kong. The Centre provides a patient-orientated, comprehensive, holistic and multi-professional clinical service of excellence. It educates the profession and allied health professionals about allergies. It engages the public and undertakes clinical research.

The Centre sees patients with any allergy or related problems

- Allergic conjunctivitis
- Allergic rhinitis
- Anaphylaxis
- Asthma
- Bronchopulmonary aspergillosis
- Drug allergy
- Eosinophilic disorders, including eosinophilic gastroenteritis / oesophagitis
- Food allergy
- Hives, eczema, angioedema
- Hypersensitivity pneumonitis
- Insect allergy
- Oral allergy syndrome

Tel: 2835 8430

Email: allergy@hksh-hospital.com



Photo:

1. Dr. Tak LEE said pre-vaccination screening can provide care for patients and members of the public who have a history of drug or vaccine allergy.



2. Skin prick test is part of the Pre-vaccination Screening Service, if the patient is allergic to the allergen, red and itchy skin will be observed at the site of the test.



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