

## Press Release

### Coronavirus Pneumonia: An International Research Breakthrough

The Department of Microbiology of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Hong Kong confirmed that the recent outbreak of pneumonia is caused by the virus known as Coronavirus. As the primary agent is confirmed, we would like to refer to the disease as Conronavirus Pneumonia (CVP).

The discovery of the agent is an important international research breakthrough. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has congratulated the University of Hong Kong on the success in culturing Coronavirus. The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) of the USA had independently confirmed that Conronavirus is the primary causative agent. They said,

“We’ve heard reports from other laboratories internationally that are also concerned that Conronavirus may be an etiology. Coronavirus is not a Paramyxovirus, it is not a metapneumovirus. It is a family of viruses that traditionally have caused common illnesses like colds and upper-respiratory tract infections and can be quite contagious.”

The discovery had also aroused international press attention. The Asian Wall Street Journal, CNN, CNBC and many other foreign media had covered the story.

The HKU’s Department of Microbiology research team had successfully found some DNA sequencing of Coronavirus. Based on the DNA sequence, a RT PCR test was devised in addition to the earlier reported immunofluorescent antibody test. The development of such diagnostic test will enable early and reliable diagnosis of CVP and hence early treatment of the disease. It also differentiates CVP from other types of pneumonia, thus patients who do not suffer from CVP can be reassured and may not need to be restricted in their daily activities.

The early phase diagnostic test helps infection control by identifying which contacts have or have not acquired CVP and ensure discharged patients will not infect the community.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Mr Lennon Tsang of the Faculty of Medicine, the University of Hong Kong at (852) 2819-2857 or (852) 9042-6733.

Please visit the website <http://www.hku.hk/facmed/press/> for press photos and supplementary information.

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