Dear Staff and Students,

**Zika Virus Infection**

As you may be aware, there is currently an emerging outbreak of Zika virus infection in a number of countries in Africa, the Americas and Pacific Islands. As the Lunar New Year holiday is fast approaching, I would like to warmly remind all of you who plan to travel abroad to stay vigilant against Zika virus infection.

The Centre for Health Protection has issued the following travel advice:

“Pregnant women and women preparing for pregnancy should consider deferring their trip to areas with ongoing Zika virus transmission [http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/view_content/43209.html]. Travellers should seek medical advice before the trip and avoid mosquito bites [http://www.fhs.gov.hk/english/health_info/woman/30014.html] during the trip. Travellers who return from affected areas and feel unwell e.g. having fever, should seek medical advice as soon as possible, and provide travel details to doctors.”

Zika virus infection is a mosquito-borne disease caused by Zika virus. The most common symptoms of Zika virus infection are fever and skin rash, usually accompanied by conjunctivitis, muscle or joint pain and general malaise. Neurological and autoimmune complications are infrequent, although have been described.

Zika virus is mainly transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected *Aedes* mosquito. Zika virus can also be transmitted through blood, but this is an infrequent mechanism. Sexual transmission of Zika virus may have occurred, and there were reports in a limited number of cases that the virus has been shown to be present in semen.

While the symptoms are generally mild and self-limiting, the greatest concern is its suspected link with brain defects in babies. More investigation is underway to study the relationship between microcephaly in babies and the Zika virus infection.

For more details, please visit the Zika Virus Infection webpage at the website of Centre for Health Protection. ([http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/view_content/43086.html](http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/view_content/43086.html))

The University is closely monitoring the situation and taking appropriate steps, such as strengthening measures on mosquito control, to protect our community against mosquito-transmitted diseases including Zika virus infection. We will keep you informed should there be new developments.

Last but not least, may I wish you all a very happy holiday and a prosperous Year of the Monkey!

Yours sincerely,

Dr. MK Cheung
Director
University Health Service
The University of Hong Kong

February 4, 2016