Virus Outbreak: Doctor treating COVID patients infected

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Minister of Health and Welfare Chen Shih-chung takes part in a news conference at the Central Epidemic Command Center in Taipei yesterday.
  Photo: CNA

The first case of a doctor contracting COVID-19 after treating an infected patient was one of two locally transmitted cases and two imported cases reported by the Central Epidemic Command Center (CECC) yesterday.

The second local case, No. 839, is the doctor's girlfriend, a nurse who works at the same hospital.

Case No. 838, a man in his 30s, is a doctor in a hospital in northern Taiwan that has been treating COVID-19 cases, said Minister of Health and Welfare Chen Shih-chung (陳時中), who heads the center.

He was in a negative-pressure isolation ward where one of the confirmed patients was staying several times on Monday and Tuesday last week, including when the patient received endotracheal intubation on Monday, Chen said.

The doctor developed a cough and a fever on Friday and he was tested for COVID-19 on Saturday, and the result came back positive on Sunday, Chen said.

His girlfriend, a nurse in her 20s who lives with him, had not treated any of the COVID-19 patients at the hospital, Chen said.

She developed a cough and a fever on Saturday, and she tested positive on Monday during an expanded testing project to test close contacts of Case No. 838, he added.

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The doctor only traveled between home and work on Wednesday and Thursday last week, had dinner alone at a shopping center food court on Friday, visited a Starbucks branch for about 30 minutes and walked to a nearby hardware store on Saturday, all in Taoyuan, Chen said, although he did not say where the hospital was located.

A total of 446 people were identified as close contacts or extended close contacts of the two new cases and were tested for COVID-19 on Monday, he said, adding that all were confirmed negative at noon yesterday, not including the nurse.

Chen said 39 of the hospital's medical staff have been put under home isolation, and all hospital employees would be tested again after three days.

Patients who had been exposed to the doctor and the nurse have been moved to private wards for 14 days' observation, and patients in the emergency room who were waiting for ward beds have been referred to other hospitals, the minister said.

Another 56 people in the local community were identified for testing, and 14 had been tested so far, he said.

National Taiwan University vice president Chang Shan-chwen (張上淳), convener of the center's specialist advisory panel, said the intubation procedure was performed by an anesthesiologist while the doctor who became case No. 838 was standing to one side, but both were wearing full protective gear.

Chang said the physician and the nurse had only mild symptoms, were stable and are being treated in negative pressure isolation wards.

The CECC has instructed the hospital to temporarily stop accepting new patients for hospitalization, prohibit visitors and allow just one registered person to accompany each hospitalized patient, Chen said.

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Deputy Minister of Health and Welfare Shih Chung-liang (施崇棠) said the doctor would receive at least NT$350,000 in compensation for being infected after treating COVID-19 patients, but whether the nurse would be eligible for compensation was under discussion.

One of the two imported cases is a Taiwanese woman in her 60s who lives permanently in the US, and returned to Taiwan on Tuesday last week to visit family, and had been staying in a quarantine hotel, Chen said.

She developed a cough with mucus and a runny nose on Sunday, and her test result came out positive yesterday, Chen said.

The other imported case is a British man in his 30s who arrived on a business trip on Dec. 29 last year and stayed in a centralized quarantine facility.

In light of the new COVID-19 variant in the UK, he was tested on Dec. 30, and the results came back negative, Chen said, adding that the man tested positive upon ending quarantine on Monday, even though he has not experienced any symptoms.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2021/01/13](#)