

Epidemiological And Clinical Characteristics of The First 18 Patients with COVID-19 in Taiwan

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Abstract

To understand the epidemiological and clinical characteristics of patients with Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) infection in Taiwan, we analyzed data from the National Notifiable Disease Surveillance System and epidemiological case investigation reports. We included all real-time reverse-transcription polymerase chain reaction (real-time RT-PCR) confirmed cases of coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19) from Jan 21 to Feb 14, 2020, and followed up until Feb 27, 2020. Eighteen cases were confirmed and all survived. Median follow-up period was 24.5 days (range: 14–35). Of them, 16 (88.9%) were imported cases, and 2 (11.1%) were infected by imported cases within household. Their median age was 52 years (range: 21–74); 8 (44.4%) were men, and 9 (50%) had comorbidities. Symptoms included cough (72.2%), fever (66.7%), rhinorrhea (22.2%) and diarrhea (11.1%); one patient (5.5%) was asymptomatic. According to the WHO definition of clinical syndromes associated with SARS-CoV-2, there were 8 (44.4%), 9 (50.0%), and 1 (5.6%) categorized as mild, moderate, and severe illness, respectively. At the end of follow-up, 9 cases met the criteria of discontinuation of isolation and 8 of them were discharged. The median time from admission to discontinuation of isolation was 21 days (range: 13–31) and the median duration of persistent RT-PCR positivity was 14 days (range: 4–22) and 15 days (range: 4–24) for upper and lower respiratory samples, respectively. The first 18 cases of COVID-19 in Taiwan were all imported or importation related, which were related to the early phase of COVID-19 epidemic. Because viral clearance may take more than 2 weeks, management plans for patients with mild illness is necessary to ensure the best use of medical care capacities during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords : Novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, COVID-19

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