

The Varicella Cluster on a Cruise Ship, 2014

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Abstract

A cruise ship reported 4 crew cases of varicella during 23rd Apr to 26th May, 2014. The attack rate to the crew members was about 0.36%. The Taiwan CDC quarantine officers and ship authorities conducted a series of case and contact investigations on board. The result showed that the virus presumably spread among common living area (crew cabin), and then causing chain infection. Compare to the crew cabin, the transmission risk of the virus through working place (casino) or air conditioner system of crew cabin is relatively low. In addition, there were some biases such as recall bias, cultural or language barriers when ship authorities tried to conduct contact investigation through face-to-face interview and questionnaire. We suggest screening the immunity of crew members by serologic test first, then vaccinate if necessary for whom at high risk, such as newly sign-on crews and crews living in the area with same nationality.

Keywords: cruise ship, varicella, quarantine, cluster, vaccine

The Taiwan Epidemiology Bulletin series of publications is published by Centers for Disease Control, Ministry of Health and Welfare, Taiwan (R.O.C.) since Dec 15, 1984.

Publisher : Hsu-Sung Kuo

Editor-in-Chief : Tsuey-Fong Lee

Telephone No : (02) 2395-9825

Executive Editor : Chien-Chun Chen, Hsiu-Lan Liu

Website : <http://www.cdc.gov.tw/teben>

Address : No.6, Linshen S. Road, Taipei, Taiwan 100 (R.O.C.)

Suggested Citation :

[Author].[Article title].Taiwan Epidemiol Bull 2013;29:[inclusive page numbers].