

**The Administration's Response to Questions raised by Members
at the Meetings of the LegCo Panel on Health Services
held on 12 and 14 May 2003**

(a) The Government's proposal to set up a CDC-type of organization in Hong Kong to fight and prevent infectious diseases.

In respect of the setting up of a CDC-type of organization in Hong Kong, we are still in an initial planning stage and will brief Members of the details in due course.

(b) The provision of video conferencing facilities in hospitals for SARS patients and their families.

At present, video conferencing facilities for SARS patients and their families are provided in five hospitals, namely, Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH), Tung Wah Group of Hospitals - Wong Tai Sin Hospital (WTSH), United Christian Hospital (UCH), Prince of Wales Hospital (PWH) and Alice Ho Miu Ling Nethersole Hospital (AHNH). The services are supported by community sponsorship to last for three months.

The video conferencing facilities in PMH and WTSH are supported by Hutchison Global Communications, and the services in these two hospitals started on 29 April. Pacific Century Cyber Work (PCCW) assisted UCH, PWH and AHNH in the arrangement, and the services in these hospitals commenced on 12 May.

Apart from the above, the Hospital Authority (HA) has received similar offers of video conferencing facilities from other community sponsors and is discussing with these sponsors on the details.

It is worth noting that a non-profit making community services initiative called "NetCare" (網絡關懷行動) under the leadership of Dr Philemon Choi Yuen-wan was established in April to work with HA in providing video conferencing facilities as well as psycho-social care to SARS patients and their families. A number of institutions and organisations including RTHK, Breakthrough Limited, Hong

Kong Hospital Chaplaincy Association, Internet Professionals Association, and the Outstanding Young Persons' Association etc. have already joined the network. Apart from providing hardware technology support, NetCare also provides psycho-social care and counselling services to patients and their families.

HA has followed strictly its Donation and Sponsorship Guidelines in accepting the sponsorships. A technology assessment process would be carried out for all video conferencing facilities to ensure system compatibility and feasibility, and that other issues such as network security are properly addressed. At the moment, the Information Technology team of HA is working actively with interested sponsors in pursuit of possible technologies to facilitate the setting up of different video conferencing systems for SARS patients and their families during this period.

(c) Information relating to enquiries into the deaths of the late Mr LAU Wing-kai and Dr TSE Yuen-man of the Tuen Mun Hospital.

Mr Lau Wing Kai was appointed as a Registered Nurse in Tuen Mun Hospital on 28 November 1997. Dr Tse Yuen Man was appointed as a Medical Officer in HA on 1 July 1993 and was posted to work in the Department of Medicine in Tuen Mun Hospital on 1 January 1995.

The Ward A5 in Tuen Mun Hospital was set up as a SARS ward on 26 March 2003 when Mr Lau and Dr Tse started to work there. Both Mr Lau and Dr Tse were admitted to Ward A5 on 3 April 2003 and were diagnosed to have contracted SARS. Mr Lau and Dr Tse were subsequently admitted to the Intensive Care Unit and unfortunately passed away on 26 April and 13 May 2003 respectively.

The deaths of Mr Lau and Dr Tse were referred to the Coroner's Court on 29 April and 13 May 2003 respectively and the Coroner will decide whether coroner inquest will be held.

(d) Response to Hon Albert CHAN's question on possible infection of school children by their classmates returning from the Mainland when more class resume.

The Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) has the following response to Hon Albert CHAN's question:

To ensure that schools provide a safe learning and teaching environment, EMB provided schools with a sample letter to parents when announcing on 27 March that all schools were going to suspend classes. The sample letter served to remind parents of a number of things, such as to avoid visiting with their children places affected by atypical pneumonia (AP). Subsequently, EMB requested schools to send a letter to parents before class resumption to call on them to join hands to prevent the spread of AP in schools. The letter enclosed, among other things, a guideline on checking body temperature from the Department of Health and a proforma to record particulars of a student's visit outside Hong Kong, if any, during class suspension period.

On the first day of class resumption, parents are required to provide information on whether their children have visited places outside Hong Kong during the class suspension period, and if so, particulars such as date and place. If students have visited countries/regions infected with SARS during the class suspension period, schools have to compile the information and forward it to EMB on the first day of class resumption. This is to facilitate follow-up actions on infected cases, if any, later on. EMB has reminded schools to be particularly alert to these students to see whether they develop any symptoms of SARS.

In addition, parents are required to take the temperature of their children every day before they go to school, fill in and sign a temperature record sheet to be returned to school by their children. If their children have fever, parents should not allow them to go to school. The above guidelines and advice are incorporated in the "Handbook on Prevention of the Spread of Atypical Pneumonia", which is available on EMB's homepage for reference of schools and

parents.

Since class resumption in phases of secondary schools and upper levels of primary schools and special schools, the above precautionary measures and reporting mechanism have been operating well and there is no sign of any spread of AP in schools. With home-school cooperation, schools will be a safe learning environment for students.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
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