

**Panel on Health Services**

**Subcommittee to monitor the implementation of the recommendations  
of the SARS Expert Committee and  
the Hospital Authority Review Panel on the SARS Outbreak**

**Summary of Written Submissions**

	<b>Recommendations of the SARS Expert Committee</b>	<b>Major views/concerns from deputations</b>
<b>I.</b>	<b>Organisation of health and healthcare system for the control of an outbreak of communicable disease</b>	
2.	Establish a Centre for Health Protection (CHP)	<p><u>Tsuen Wan Adventist Hospital</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ It will be desirable that the CHP is independent of the Government.</li> </ul> <p><u>Hong Kong Doctors Union</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Agrees with the setting up of a CHP, which would integrate the manpower of private and public medical sectors in combating epidemics such as SARS.</li> </ul> <p><u>Hong Kong Society for Nursing Education Limited</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Establishment of a CHP is an important strategy, as the present health resources are largely focused in hospital services.</li> <li>➤ CHP should be provided with adequate statutory powers and funding to ensure its smooth operation.</li> </ul>

		<p><u>Hong Kong Baptist Hospital</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Establishment of a CHP could be a step forward for Hong Kong.</li><li>➤ It is important that adequate funding and manpower are provided for CHP to enable it to function effectively.</li></ul> <p><u>Department of Nursing Studies of the University of Hong Kong</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Adequate statutory powers and funding are essential to ensure the smooth running of CHP.</li></ul> <p><u>Faculty of Medicine of the University of Hong Kong</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Without a strong foundation, emphasis and focus in research, CHP may eventually become just another Government department in the bureaucracy, without a clear demarcation of any expertise and functions from the Department of Health (DH).</li><li>➤ The ability to handle disease outbreaks with strong research and a multi-disciplinary approach should be the core characteristic of CHP. Only through research that the infectious agent of a new dangerous disease could be accurately identified, innovative treatment regimens and novel vaccines developed, and the disease finally eradicated.</li><li>➤ A group of world-class research experts in the relevant areas, including infectious disease epidemiology, health communication, health information system, clinical medicine, bacteriology, virology, parasitology, mycology and immunology, is required to form an effective team to deal with the outbreaks.</li></ul>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ The naming of CHP should better follow the nomenclature adopted by similar agencies across the world, e.g. CDC of USA and China CDC, to enable it to be immediately recognisable internationally and regarded to be in the same league.</li></ul>
3.	Health, Welfare and Food Bureau (HWFB) to ensure that necessary systems are in place to coordinate activities and responsibilities of DH, Hospital Authority (HA) and private sector for the control of an outbreak of communicable disease	<p><u>Hong Kong Society for Nursing Education Limited</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ The organisational structure of the healthcare system should be streamlined for better communication.</li></ul> <p><u>Hong Kong Baptist Hospital</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ HWFB to coordinate activities and responsibilities of DH, HA and the private sector for the control of an outbreak of communicable disease is welcomed.</li></ul> <p><u>St. Paul's Hospital</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Cooperation of public and private health care providers under the leadership of HWFB is essential to ensure safe, effective and efficient management of future outbreaks of epidemics.</li><li>➤ There is a lack of private laboratory service, which patients can safely rely on to carry out SARS tests. The Government should provide assistance so that private laboratories, which purport to have the necessary safety and quality standards, could register with the Government for these special test services.</li><li>➤ Government should also ensure that the safety and quality standards, including safety during deliver/collection of specimens, are met.</li></ul>

4.	To consider changing the name of HA to reflect its wider responsibilities	<u>Hong Kong Doctors Union</u>  ➤ The name of HA should not be changed to the Health Services Authority, as it would mislead the public to turn to the public sector for whatever illnesses, thus further aggravating the existing uneven distribution of workload between the private and the public sectors.
<b>II. Health protection functions</b>		
7.	Ensure a major outbreak control plan in place with scenario planning and table-top exercises	<u>Hong Kong Baptist Hospital</u>  ➤ The implementation of a comprehensive contingency plan for SARS is welcomed. The Baptist Hospital had worked closely with DH and completed a SARS contingency plan with four levels of alert.
<b>III. Collaboration within the Pearl River Delta region and with the international community</b>		
11.	HWFB/DH/CHP to establish contingent plans and relations with organisations and individuals with outbreak control experience and with capacity to pull together with a team of expertise (e.g. World Health Organisation/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in USA/Health Protection agency in UK)	<u>Hong Kong Doctors Union</u>  ➤ Better collaboration with health authorities of surrounding areas and worldwide should be developed.

<b>IV. Coordination within Hong Kong</b>		
12.	Improve working relationships among DH, HA, private sector, universities and primary care sector	<p><u>Hong Kong Sanatorium &amp; Hospital, Ltd.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ As private doctors and hospitals have limited resources at their disposal, it is essential that adequate and prompt support be given to them in times of outbreak. Rigid rules and policies must be dispensed with in the interest of public health. Specific examples include the receipt of patients with suspected infections, undertaking diagnostic or confirmatory tests, sending out personnel to assist, providing personal protective equipment and drugs, ambulance transport, etc.</li></ul> <p><u>Hong Kong Baptist Hospital</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ During early part of the SARS epidemic, information flow from HA and DH to the private sector was occasional and haphazard. For examples, requests to the microbiology departments of DH and HA for testing of SARS patients were turned down, and there was difficulty in obtaining information on patients transferred to HA hospitals with no documentation made available on the clinical course and outcome of the patients.</li><li>➤ During the SARS epidemic, information exchanges and communication were not purposely organised. Since October 2003, representatives of HA and DH have met with the Hospital on designating contact persons and channels of communication. Fully utilising rapid electronic means seems to be effective and efficient. At times, however, a triplicate set of the same information have been received-one each from HA, DH and the Hong Kong Medical Association. Perhaps a central clearing house for information distribution could be more direct and precise in achieving the intended purposes.</li></ul>

		<p><u>Hong Kong Society for the Aged</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Suspected SARS cases from residential care homes for the elderly, which turn out to be non-SARS cases, should be notified to the operators concerned.</li> </ul> <p><u>Tsuen Wan Adventist Hospital</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The Government should make known to all healthcare workers, including those of the private hospitals, details of the implementation of the recommendations on improving the working relationship amongst DH, HA, the private sector, universities and primary care sector, in particular, rotating staff through the different systems.</li> </ul>
13.	Enhance the role of private sector for disease surveillance through developing a web-based system for electronic notification by private practitioners and provide regular updates of surveillance results to them	<p><u>Tsuen Wan Adventist Hospital</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Supports the development of a web-based system for electronic notification by private practitioners and provide regular updates of surveillance results to them.</li> </ul>
<b>V. The management of an epidemic, including surge capacity</b>		
16.	Review surge capacity and enhance preparedness	<p><u>Hong Kong Society for Nursing Education Limited</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Surge capacity is an important element that needs to be looked at.</li> </ul> <p><u>Society for Community Organization</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Should not rule out the establishment of an infectious disease hospital.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ HA should improve ward environment and facilities to reduce the risks of cross infection.</li> </ul>
19.	Make clear the command and control structure to manage an outbreak or epidemic	<u>Hong Kong Doctors Union</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The "war cabinet" as recommended would be effective in management of crisis if it is vested with appropriate authority.</li> </ul>
<b>VI. Communications</b>		
23.	DH/CHP to coordinate and implement the communications strategy	<u>St. Paul's Hospital</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ DH and HA should together issue only one statement to the private hospitals, for better communication and clearer directives regarding treatment protocol and transfer of patients in dangerous epidemics such as SARS.</li> </ul>
28.	Capacity to communicate effectively and regularly with the public in times of epidemic must be described, available and understood	<u>Consumer Council</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Supports the recommendations made with regard to communications with the public.</li> </ul> <u>Hong Kong Society for Nursing Education Limited</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Communication to the public is of utmost importance.</li> </ul> <u>Hong Kong Sanatorium &amp; Hospital, Ltd.</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The staged alert system should be widely publicised.</li> </ul>

<b>VII. Surveillance, information and data management</b>		
31.	Make the enhanced data management system a permanent part of the infrastructure to support the control of communicable diseases	<p><u>Hong Kong Baptist Hospital</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The enhanced data management system should be made available to the private sector for the purpose of tracking of individuals in controlling communicable disease.</li> <li>➤ The e-SARS reporting system should also be made available to the private sector.</li> </ul>
32.	Extend the enhanced data management system to link up with other sectors, including private sector and community clinics	<p><u>Hong Kong Baptist Hospital</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Being a public health project, the enhanced data management system should be funded by the Government for all sectors.</li> </ul>
<b>VIII. Clinical practice</b>		
34.	HA to update treatment guidelines regularly based on the best laboratory and clinical evidence available locally and overseas	<p><u>Hong Kong Baptist Hospital</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Treatment guidelines based on the best available laboratory and clinical evidence should be shared by all sectors.</li> </ul> <p><u>Hong Kong Sanatorium &amp; Hospital, Ltd.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Any new knowledge, findings, diagnosis, treatment, laboratory tests, epidemiological information etc must be propagated electronically to the private health care workers as soon as possible.</li> </ul>



<b>IX. Research and training</b>		
35.	The Government and HA to work with universities and research funding providers to ensure that research places due emphasis on public health and priority is given to urgent projects that need to undertaken urgently in order to prepare for any future outbreak of SARS	<u>Faculty of Medicine of the University of Hong Kong</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ The Faculty is extremely disappointed that the \$450 million earmarked by the Government for setting up a Research Fund for the Control of Infectious Diseases (RFCID) to finance research for the control of infectious diseases has turned out to be a funding scheme for disbursement of small project grants.</li><li>➤ RFCID should essentially serve a completely different purpose. Its scope and operation should be strategic and focused, for a few big projects with enormous potential for ground-breaking deliverables and based on the investigators' track records.</li></ul>
<b>X. Engaging the community</b>		
42.	A contingency fund for public relief supported by contributions from the Government and the community should be considered	<u>Society for Community Organization</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Urges the expeditious setting up of a contingency fund for public relief.</li></ul>
<b>XI. Occupational health</b>		
43.	HA to review its occupational health services and put in place a comprehensive package of occupational health services	<u>Tsuen Wan Adventist Hospital</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ A comprehensive package of occupational health services should be put in place.</li></ul>

		<p><u>Department of Nursing Studies of the University of Hong Kong</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Little has been mentioned to improve the psychological support to staff. Self help group can be formed to provide emotional support and care among staff to promote well-being.</li> </ul>
<p><b>XII. Post-SARS environment and its impact</b></p>		
<p>44.</p>	<p>HA to assess and address the medical and psychological needs of recovered SARS patients and develop a programme to cater for their needs</p>	<p><u>Hong Kong Baptist Hospital</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A central coordinating agency should be set up to handle the enormous and prolonged task of medical and psycho-social needs of patients who are recovering from SARS.</li> <li>➤ To be effective and efficient the central coordinating agency, with the sole function of assisting such patients, should be vested with the power to cut across bureaucracies in departments of the Government.</li> <li>➤ A central registry should be maintained for the purpose of documentation and follow up of the works of the central coordinating agency.</li> <li>➤ HA should ensure that all surviving SARS patients have access to high quality aftercare and counseling and this should be implemented as soon as possible.</li> <li>➤ Some of the healthcare workers of Baptist Hospital recovered from SARS are not getting the required services.</li> <li>➤ The pastoral department of Baptist Hospital could work hand in hand with HA to enhance such aftercare and counseling.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ As aftercare and counseling services may cut across departments in the public services, a central director for such an effort with the means to integrate the services crossing department may be needed.</li> <li>➤ The aftercare and counseling services should also be made available to those who have been misdiagnosed and treated as SARS patients.</li> </ul> <p><u>Department of Nursing Studies of the University of Hong Kong</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Providing continuous support to the SARS recovered patients and staff is appropriate. Staff also need to be trained in suicide risk assessment, bereavement counseling and effective psychological support etc. in order to ensure well being for all parties involved in the process.</li> </ul>
46.	A study should be undertaken to assess the extent and impact of discrimination against former SARS patients, their families and contacts. Appropriate support for those discriminated against should be considered	<p><u>Society for Community Organization</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The Government should educate the public with a view to galvanising the support of the community to former SARS patients, their families and contacts.</li> <li>➤ The Disability Discrimination Ordinance should be strictly enforced to deter people from discriminating former SARS patients, their families and contacts.</li> </ul>

	<p align="center"><b>Recommendations of the HA Review Panel on the SARS Outbreak</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Major views/concerns from deputations</b></p>
R5	<p>HA in partnership with DH should develop a staged alert system which states the conditions under which the alert level should be raised and provides mechanisms for determining the timing and tone with respect to -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Raising the level of awareness within a hospital.</li> <li>2) Raising the level of awareness of all healthcare workers in all hospitals.</li> <li>3) Raising the level of alert to the private medical sector and private hospitals.</li> <li>4) Raising the level of alert to the public.</li> <li>5) Advising the Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food as to the necessity of establishing a 'war cabinet'.</li> </ol>	<p><u>Department of Nursing Studies of the University of Hong Kong</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The level of awareness and training of those practising outside main stream medicine, such as those practising in the alternative medicine, should be raised.</li> </ul>
R17	<p>HA should review its human resources (HR) function and assess what extra skills and resources are required to provide the capabilities to deal with a major crisis</p>	<p><u>Department of Nursing Studies of the University of Hong Kong</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Hiring well qualified temporary staffing could be considered as one way of enhancing the strategic capabilities of HA's HR function. Attention needs to be drawn that not</li> </ul>

		<p>only the management has been downsized. The substantial reduction in the number of nurses has greatly affected care delivery to patients. It is therefore important to consider hiring more nurses, particularly those who are experienced.</p>
R18	<p>HA should develop a communications strategy for crisis that recognises as a central tenet that the purpose of communications during a crisis is not only to inform, but also to motivate staff and move the organisation in a desired direction. To be effective, HA communications strategy should focus on clarity, simplicity, and consistency of message to all stakeholders. Furthermore, the communications strategy should include means by which the public is not simply informed but also educated. The strategy should address the issues of securing the appropriate resources and expertise to ensure effective communications, particularly with the public, during a crisis</p>	<p><u>Department of Nursing Studies of the University of Hong Kong</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Effective ways to control spread of the disease are immediate alert via all channels of communication, education of the public and involved parties, and active vigilance and containment of the sources.</li> <li>➤ It is great that HA is in the process of developing a communication strategy that focuses on clarity, simplicity, and being proactively educational. This is necessary when applied to mass media interventions.</li> <li>➤ Daily communication system of HA may need improvement. Electronic communication such as email, which is more cost-effective and time-effective in communication, is suggested. This may compliment "hand-delivered" communication.</li> </ul>
R22	<p>There should be a campaign to educate the community on the importance of strict compliance with any isolation or quarantine measures introduced. This will require a multi-agency effort</p>	<p><u>Tsuen Wan Adventist Hospital</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ There should be more coverage on continuous education and supports provided to staff and patients. The infectious disease expert may conduct seminar in private hospital to increase awareness of various infectious diseases and precautions to be taken.</li> </ul>

		<p><u>Hong Kong Baptist Hospital</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Public and patient education is always important to ensure an enlightened population who can readily understand, accept and practice proper infection control, isolation or quarantine.</li> </ul> <p><u>Department of Nursing Studies of the University of Hong Kong</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ HA should work closely with DH so that education to the community can be implemented more effectively without duplicating efforts. Outreach teams can actively participate in the provision of education to the public and work closely with other agencies.</li> </ul>
R26	As part of contingency planning, authoritative policies and protocols should be developed in advance that will help guide staff in decision making	<p><u>Department of Nursing Studies of the University of Hong Kong</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ More rigorous guidelines/policies need to be developed or revised as soon as possible to ensure safe practice of medical and health care personnel, including those working in the laboratory settings.</li> </ul>
R30	HA should ensure that it has an adequate pool of trained ICU and other appropriate staff available for deployment to deal with a major infectious disease outbreak	<p><u>Department of Nursing Studies of the University of Hong Kong</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Regular rotation of staff to ICU setting is necessary to refresh what has been learnt.</li> <li>➤ Regular update and refresh of skills in all involved parties are necessary to ensure quality of practice.</li> </ul>

R31	Looking to the future, HA should examine how mechanisms for redeployment of staff can be established	<p><u>Department of Nursing Studies of the University of Hong Kong</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Should be based on staff agreement to prevent poor morale, job dissatisfaction and increase in absenteeism. HA needs to take into consideration staff specialties and preparation for the assignments.</li> <li>➤ HA also needs to consider if movement of staff from one hospital to another is effective or not. Consultation with staff who had such experience would be worthwhile for manpower planning for the next outbreak.</li> </ul>
R32	HA should seek to improve and increase ward facilities with the purpose of reducing the risks of cross infection and improving the quality of patient care	<p><u>Department of Nursing Studies of the University of Hong Kong</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Timeline and actions to develop infectious disease block should be formulated as soon as possible.</li> </ul>
R33	During a crisis, effective communication with patients and their families is vital to providing quality patient care and can also improve compliance with infection control requirements. HA should ensure that when developing policies and training staff this vital area is given priority	<p><u>Department of Nursing Studies of the University of Hong Kong</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Effective communication and counseling skills are crucial to client relationship and support during crisis. Proper training and re-education ought to be provided to the staff in these aspects.</li> <li>➤ Training should be initiated within a short period of time. Setting an upcoming training timeline and put forth the action can have the SARS prepared workers deployed more effectively during crisis.</li> </ul>

R35	HA should consider engaging the services of professional communications consultants, with experience in crisis management, to assist with developing crisis communication plans and with implementing those plans during any future crisis	<u>Society for Community Organization</u>  ➤ Professional communication consultants should be hired not only in times of crisis, as issues of wide public concern, such as fees restructuring, viral gastroenteritis outbreaks in hospitals and liver transplant arrangements, also warranted the services of these consultants.
R37	In the future, once guidelines [on infection control] are issued during a crisis HA should immediately establish a mechanism for ensuring compliance with those guidelines at all levels. The Infection Control Enforcement Network established during the SARS outbreak can provide a model for this	<u>Department of Nursing Studies of the University of Hong Kong</u>  ➤ Mandatory requirement of private hospitals to have properly trained and educated infectious control nurses are necessary to ensure community wide health protection and disease prevention. The same infectious control training should be applied to all hospital managers and administrators to ensure quality control in the process.



**Other views and suggestions**

	<b>Deputations</b>	<b>Major views</b>
1.	The University of Hong Kong - Faculty of Medicine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Suggests the establishment of the Hong Kong Agency for Infectious Disease Control and Prevention (HKADC), a proposal of which had been submitted to the Chief Executive of the HKSAR Government and the Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food in May and June 2003 respectively. Replies from the Government are still pending.</li> <li>➤ The main objective of HKADC is to provide rapid response and the surge capacity required to handle any disease outbreak in the Region, especially those of threats to Hong Kong. It was proposed that HKADC should be established as a Government-supported agency based at the University of Hong Kong.</li> <li>➤ With strong multi-disciplinary research base and yet a minimal number of full-time staff, HKADC would serve as a commanding unit to assemble rapidly a response team in short notice to control and prevent infectious disease outbreak.</li> </ul>
2.	Hong Kong Society for the Aged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To better prepare RCHEs for any future infectious disease outbreak -               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ventilation and isolation facilities should be enhanced;</li> <li>- The number of residents should be reduced to avoid cross infection due to overcrowded environment;</li> <li>- Holiday camps should be utilised for isolation of elderly residents discharged from hospitals; and</li> <li>- The Visiting Medical Officer (VMO) Scheme should be extended to cover all RCHEs.</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Guidelines on infection control for the elderly residents to follow should be devised. People who fail to observe the guidelines should be penalised. For example, those who repeatedly fail to observe the guidelines may be asked to leave the homes.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Education and publicity campaigns such as seminars, workshops, sharing sessions should be regularly conducted.</li> </ul>
3.	Hong Kong Baptist Hospital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Suggests the setting up of a central clearing house for information distribution to avoid the same piece of information to be received in triplicate from HA, DH and the Hong Kong Medical Association.</li> </ul>
4.	Hong Kong Society for Nursing Education Limited	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ There is a need for not just random controlled trials but also qualitative studies of the effect of personal protective equipment on staff performance as well as its psychosocial impact for instance.</li> </ul>
5.	Department of Nursing Studies of the University of Hong Kong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Training should be provided to all categories or levels of medical and health professional in both public and private sectors, including nurses working in the academic arena.</li> <li>➤ Strategies for disease prevention and control for outreach teams, such as the Community Geriatric Assessment Teams and Community Nursing Teams, are not stated. A protocol should be developed for dealing with clients in the community and how to carry out precautionary measures in the provision of outreach services.</li> </ul>
6.	Hong Kong Infection Control Nurses Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Both the reports of the SARS Expert Committee and the HA Review Panel on the SARS Outbreak focused mainly on the managerial aspects, whilst the contents on the operational aspects in infection control are too brief and not in-depth enough.</li> </ul>
7.	Society for Community Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ HA should standardise its healthcare services in areas such as treatment protocol, isolation facilities, nursing care and ward environment, etc.</li> </ul>

8.	Hong Kong Association of Dental Surgery Assistants	➤ Continued strict observance of the guidelines on "Coronavirus Pneumonia : Infection Control Measure for Dental Clinics" given by the Hong Kong Dental Association.
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Council Business Division 2  
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