

香港社會醫學學院的信頭
Letterhead of HONG KONG COLLEGE OF COMMUNITY MEDICINE

Your ref: CB2/SS/4/98
Our ref: WW/THLHKCCM1/LEGCO1/syc

Paper No. CB(2)1094/99-00(01)

11 February 2000

By Mail and Fax: 2509 9055

Mrs Constance Li
Legislative Council Secretariat
3/F Citibank Tower, Garden Road
Hong Kong

Dear Mrs Li

Thank you for your letter of 27 January 2000.

I apologise for the slight delay in reply. Having consulted Professor T W Wong and other specialists in The Hong Kong College of Community Medicine, our reply is as follows:

In clinical practice, a doctor will normally grant sick leave to a patient if, in his medical opinion, temporary absence from work is justified on grounds of the illness that the patient is suffering from. In this circumstance, the patient usually has some symptoms arising from the illness, and needs treatment and rest for recovery. Even in the absence of symptoms, a doctor may give sick leave to a patient if, in his opinion, the patient's health condition may be aggravated by his return to work.

Insofar as temporary suspension of a worker from his occupation based on health reasons, for example from abnormal findings from medical examination, is concerned, the purpose of such suspension is to prevent further exposure to a harmful agent / substance in the work environment so as to protect the health of the worker. Such suspension should be recommended by an appointed medical practitioner only in the best interest of the health and safety of the worker. The recommendation is made after due consideration of the medical condition of the worker and his occupation. If a worker, after the medical examination, is found to be suffering from an occupational disease which should improve with rest, he/she is normally granted sick leave. A temporarily suspended worker whose cause for temporary suspension does not affect his overall capacity to work, but whose health may be jeopardised by further exposure to a harmful agent / substance in the work environment, may be redeployed to another job, if the latter job does not involve exposure to such harmful agent / substance. For example, if a worker engaged in lead work has a high blood lead level exceeding a recommended standard, but has not yet developed any symptoms, he/she would be recommended by the doctor to be temporarily suspended from his occupation and be redeployed to another job. If the appointed medical practitioner is satisfied that a suitable redeployment to another job is not possible, the appointed medical practitioner would normally grant sick leave to the worker to prevent him from further exposure to the harmful agent / substance.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

Professor T H Lam, MD, FFPHM, FFOM, FHKCCM, FHKAM, FRCP

cc Dr W K Lo (Fax: 2541 8721)
 Professor T W Wong (Fax: 2606 3500)