

CONFIDENTIAL



PRINCESS MARGARET HOSPITAL

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20th February 2004

The Chairman
Select Committee
Legislative Council of Hong Kong
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central, Hong Kong
By Fax: 2248 2011
(Attn: Ms Wan)

Dear Sir,

**Select Committee to inquire into the handling of the severe acute respiratory
syndrome outbreak by the Government and the Hospital Authority**

Your letter of 6th February 2004 refers.

I hereby submit the following, as request:

1. My responses to the questions set up in Appendix IV
2. My qualifications

Thank you.

Yours truly,

Dr. YU Wai Cho
Consultant Physician
Princess Margaret Hospital

Appendix IV

Please respond to the following questions in your written statement -

- 1. What are your role and duties as the Consultant of the Respiratory Team of Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH)? What were your specific responsibilities in the handling of the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) at PMH?**

My role as consultant of the Respiratory Team of PMH are:

- (1) To provide specialist care in respiratory medicine to patients of PMH
- (2) To maintain and develop services in respiratory medicine
- (3) To provide higher physician training in respiratory medicine
- (4) To provide training in respiratory care to nursing and allied health professionals
- (5) To conduct clinical research in respiratory medicine

During the outbreak of SARS in PMH, my specific responsibilities are:

- (1) To provide medical care to patients with SARS
- (2) To lead medical teams which provide treatment for patients with SARS
- (3) To formulate treatment strategies for SARS
- (4) To assist the Chief-of-Service (COS, Dr. K L Tong) in administrative matters in response to the SARS epidemic
- (5) To conduct clinical research in SARS

- 2. Were you involved in the discussion on the designation of PMH as a SARS hospital? If not, why not? If yes, what views did you express?**

Yes. I mentioned that the 14 beds in the PMH ICU needed to be expanded to meet the anticipated increase in workload.

- 3. Were you involved in making the necessary preparations to turn PMH to be a SARS hospital? If not, why not? If yes, for what preparations were you responsible? How much time were you given to make the preparations? Was the time given sufficient to make such preparations? If not, did you ask for more time?**

No. My clinical expertise was in heavy demand in the wards so I was spared of the preparation work in the interest of patient care.

- 4. Did you consider PMH ready to serve as a SARS hospital on 29 March 2003? If not, why not? Did you raise your concern with the hospital management? If yes, what was the response? Who made the decision that PMH should commence to serve as a SARS hospital despite the fact that there was not sufficient time to make the necessary preparations?**

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PMH was not very ready to serve as SARS hospital on 29 March 2003. However, I believe circumstances did not allow us to be completely equipped before we take up the challenge.

5. Did any healthcare workers (HCWs) under your charge contract SARS during the outbreak at PMH? If yes, when was the first of such cases reported to you? What was your response to the situation? Did you inform the hospital management immediately? If not, why not? If yes, what was their response? How many HCWs under your charge were infected during the SARS outbreak at PMH? Did you make an assessment of why these HCWs had fallen ill with SARS? If not, why not? If yes, what was the assessment?

The HCWs of my Department are under the charge of the COS so none are under my charge. In the Department meetings we did assess the reason for our nursing colleagues fallen ill with SARS. Possible reasons were (1) involvement of staff in high risk procedures, and (2) the viral load were high.

6. A series of staff forums were held for the Kowloon West Cluster commencing 27 March 2003. Did you attend these forums? If not, why not? If yes, what was your assessment of the usefulness of these forums?

I attend some of them. I think they are useful.

7. A control and coordinating centre commenced operation at PMH on 31 March 2003. Did you know what the role and functions of this centre were? Did you know why it was necessary to set up this centre when the New Territories West Regional Office of the Department of Health had already set up a control centre at PMH on 28 March 2003? Did you know what was the working relationship between the two centres and what information was exchanged between the two centres?

I am not sure about the function of these centres as I am mostly involved in clinical management of SARS patients.

8. On 7 April 2003, PMH stopped the admission of SARS patients from all hospitals except Yan Chai Hospital and Caritas Medical Centre. Who made the decision and what were the considerations? In which forum was the decision made and who were involved in the discussion? Were you involved in the discussion? If not, why not? If yes, what views did you express? Why was the decision taken at that point in time?

I am not sure who made the decision.

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9. On 7 April 2003, PMH began transferring SARS patients to Wong Tai Sin Hospital for convalescence. In which forum was the decision made and who were involved in the discussion? Who made the decision and what were the considerations? Were you involved in the discussion? If not, why not? If yes, what views did you express? Why was the decision taken at that point in time?

I am not sure who made the decision.

10. Were there any step-down arrangements for patients before they were transferred out? If not, why not? If yes, when were the step-down arrangements put in place?

Wong Tai Sin Hospital was our step-down care facility and patients who showed sustained improvement as stipulated in a set of criteria would be transferred there for convalescent care. Such arrangement was put in place from 7 April 2003 onwards.

11. On 11 April 2003, PMH stopped admission of new SARS cases. In which forum was the decision made and who were involved in the discussion? Who made the decision and what were the considerations? Were you involved in the discussion? If not, why not? If yes, what views did you express? Why was the decision taken at that point in time?

I am not sure who made the decision.

12. On 11 April 2003, PMH began transferring "potential intensive care unit (ICU)" patients to other hospitals. Were they non-SARS patients? In which forum was the decision made and who were involved in the discussion? Who made the decision and what were the considerations? Were you involved in the discussion? If not, who not? If yes, what views did express? Why was the decision taken at that point in time?

These were SARS patients. I am not sure who made the decision.

13. Was the respiratory equipment used in the ICU of PMH equipped with filters? If yes, was the respiratory equipment only equipped with filters during the SARS outbreak? If yes, when was the equipment fitted with filters and on whose advice?

I was informed by my ICU colleagues that their respiratory equipment were equipped with filters.

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