
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

95% confidence interval	A computed interval with a given probability at 95% that the true value of an estimation is contained within the interval.
Adenovirus	One of a group of viruses capable of causing disease of the upper respiratory tract and conjunctiva.
Adult respiratory distress syndrome	Acute respiratory distress in adults characterised by severe shortness of breath, increased respiratory rate, cyanosis refractory to oxygen therapy, loss of lung compliance and diffuse alveolar infiltrates seen on the chest x-ray.
Aerosol transmission	Transmission of disease by dissemination of microbial aerosols to a suitable portal of entry, usually the respiratory tract. Aerosols are suspensions in the air, in the 1 to 5µg range, that may remain suspended in the air for a long period of time.
Aetiological agent	The agent that causes a disease.
Aetiology	The cause(s) or origin of a disease.
Afferent	Conveying towards a centre.
Age-specific incidence rate	The rate at which new cases of disease occur in a population for a specified age group in a defined period.
Air-borne infection	An infection that is contracted by inhalation of microorganisms or spores suspended in air.
AMS	Auxiliary Medical Service
Arthralgia	Joint pain.
Assisted ventilation	Help with breathing that involves “pushing” air into the airways/lungs during breathing in, and allowing air to leave the lungs during breathing out. The air may be oxygen-enriched and supplied using either mechanical or manual equipment, via a tube inserted into the airway, or simply via a mask placed over the face or nose.
Asymptomatic	Without symptoms, showing or cause no symptoms.

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Atypical pneumonia	This refers to a type of pneumonia that does not follow the typical signs and symptoms of pneumonia. A number of different viral and bacterial agents which can cause this form of respiratory infection have been identified.
Atypical presentation	Presentation of symptoms which does not follow the general or typical description.
Autoimmune disease	A disease caused by attacks of cells, tissues, and organs of a person's body by his own immune system.
Autopsy	The postmortem examination of a body, including the internal organs and structures after dissection, so as to determine the cause of death or the nature of pathological changes.
Basic viral reproductive number	A measure of the number of infections produced, on average, by an infected individual in a totally susceptible population.
Bilateral infiltration	The diffusion or accumulation in both sides of the lung tissue of inflammatory exudation.
Blood-borne infection	An infection caused by any pathogen present in blood or other body fluids transmissible via the parenteral, mucosal, or non-intact skin route.
Cardiothoracic surgeons	Surgeons who undergo specialised training in surgery of the heart, lungs, oesophagus and other contents of the chest.
CAS	Civil Aid Service
Case control study	A type of observational analytic study. Enrollment into the study is based on presence ("case") or absence ("control") of disease. Characteristics such as previous exposure are then compared between cases and controls.
Case fatality rate (CFR)	The proportion of cases of disease which are fatal within a specified time.
CESC	The Chief Executive's Steering Committee
<i>Chlamydia pneumoniae</i>	A species of bacteria that causes acute respiratory infection, especially atypical pneumonia.

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CHP	Centre for Health Protection
Clinical admissions	Scheduled admission for non-emergency medical problems.
Clinical microbiologists	Clinical microbiologists perform laboratory tests to provide physicians with information needed for diagnosis and treatment with respect to the control of communicable diseases.
Clinical trials	An experiment in humans designed to accurately assess the effects of treatment by reducing random error and bias.
Cohorting of patients	It refers to the sharing of rooms and placing of infected patients with appropriate roommates. Patients infected by the same microorganism usually can share a room.
Communicable disease	An illness due to a specific infectious agent or its toxic products that arises through transmission of that agent or its products from an infected person, animal, or reservoir to a susceptible host, either directly or indirectly through an intermediate plant or animal host, vector, or the inanimate environment.
Community-acquired pneumonia	Pneumonia acquired in the community, that is the pneumonia is not present nor incubating during a hospital stay.
Co-morbidities	Co-existing diseases or medical problems that are listed as secondary diagnoses (not the principal diagnosis or main reason for admission). Conditions are designated as comorbidities if they are not directly related to the principal diagnosis and are likely to have originated prior to the hospital stay.
Contact tracing	The process of identifying relevant contacts of a person with an infectious disease and implementation of control measures.
Contacts	Asymptomatic persons in touch with an infected person.
Coronavirus	A group of morphologically similar RNA viruses that cause respiratory infections in humans. They are called coronaviruses because of their resemblance, under the electron microscope, to a corona or crown.

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Corticosteroids	Any of the steroids elaborated by the adrenal cortex (excluding the sex hormones of adrenal origin) in response to the release of corticotrophin (adrenocorticotrophic hormone) by the pituitary gland, or any of the synthetic equivalents of these steroids.
Cryptic	Concealed, hidden.
Cubicle	A compartment in a larger area, such as a dormitory or a ward, separated from similar adjoining compartments and from the rest of the room by partitions.
CUHK	The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Cytokines	A type of protein that causes surrounding immune system cells to become activated, grow, or die.
DH	Department of Health
Disease surveillance	The continuing scrutiny of all aspects of the occurrence and spread of a disease that is pertinent to effective control.
Disinfectants	An agent that disinfects; applied particularly to agents used on inanimate objects.
Disinfection	The specific killing of infectious agents outside the body by direct exposure to chemicals or physical agents.
Disinfestated	Destroy or remove undesired small animal forms, particularly insects or rodents, present upon the person, the clothing, or in the environment of an individual or on domestic animals.
Efferent	Conveying away from a centre.
Enteric	Of, relating to, or affecting the intestines.
Environmental decontamination	It is a process or treatment that renders an instrument or environmental surface safe to handle. The procedure can be as simple as clean-up with detergent and water or as thorough as sterilisation. Sterilisation and disinfection are two ways to address microbial contamination.
Epidemic	The occurrence in a community or region of cases of an illness, specific health-related behavior, or other health-related events clearly in excess of normal expectancy. The community or region and the period in which the cases occur are specified precisely.

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Epidemic curve	A graphic plotting of the distribution of cases by time of onset.
Epidemiological study	A scientific study to provide evidence on whether a particular exposure cause or prevent disease in which the investigator does not exert control over the exposure factor to the study subjects.
Epidemiology	The study of the distribution and determinants of health-related states or events in specified populations, and the application of this study to control of health problems.
Fomites	Fomites are inanimate objects that carry disease-causing agents that spread infections.
Gastrointestinal symptoms	Symptoms pertaining to or communicating with the stomach and gut.
Genome sequencing	Determining the order of nucleotide bases in a strand of DNA/RNA.
Geriatric ward	Section of a hospital in which the elderly are cared for.
GOARN	Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network
HA	Hospital Authority
Haemodialysis	A treatment to replace the function of the kidney, for patients with kidney failure, by taking blood from the body to be cleaned in a filter known as a dialyser (artificial kidney).
HKSAR	Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
Hospital acquired infection	An infection that is neither present nor incubating when a patient enters hospital but is acquired during a hospital stay.
HWFB	Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
Hydrocortisone	A drug used in the treatment of inflammations and allergies.
IACC	Inter-departmental Action Coordinating Committee
Immune hyperactive phase	It is the phase of disease when the body mounts in the immune response to kill virus but at the same time causes damage to the body tissue itself.

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Immune modulating	Adjustment of the immune response to a desired level, as in immunopotential, immunosuppression, or induction of immunologic tolerance.
Immuno-compromised patients	Patients who are having immune response attenuated by administration of immunosuppressive drugs, by irradiation, by malnutrition, and by some disease processes (eg cancer).
Incubation period	The time interval between invasion by an infectious agent and appearance of the first sign or symptom of the disease in question.
Infectivity	The characteristic of the disease agent that embodies capability to enter, survive, and multiply in the host.
Intubated	With insertion of tube into the airway for assisted ventilation.
Isolation	Separation of infected persons from others and restricts their movement to prevent or limit the transmission of the infectious agent.
LDH	Lactate dehydrogenate
Lactate dehydrogenase	An enzyme that is found in the liver, kidneys, skeletal muscle, and the myocardium, and appears in elevation when these organs or tissues are diseased or injured.
Lancet	The Lancet is an international medical journal.
Lung biopsy	Removal of a small piece of the lung tissue for examination for cancer, infection, or other lung diseases.
Lymphocyte count	A count of the number of lymphocytes, a type of white blood cell, in the blood.
Lymphopenia	Decrease in the proportion of lymphocytes in the blood.
Macrophages	A type of cells occurring in the walls of blood vessels and in loose connective tissue that ingest microorganism or foreign particles.
Malaise	A vague feeling of discomfort or tiredness.
Microbiology	The science which deals with the study of microorganisms, including bacteria, fungi, viruses, and pathogenic protozoa.
MIIDSS	Major Incident Investigation and Disaster Support System

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Molecular studies	The study of the biochemical and molecular processes within cells, especially the processes of replication, transcription, and translation.
Myalgia	Muscle pain.
Nasopharyngeal aspirate	To collect secretion from the nose and pharynx by insertion of catheter through the nose and with gentle suction.
Nebuliser	An atomizer, or a device for throwing a spray, used mostly to relieve respiratory tract problems.
Necroscopic	The act of examination of a body after death.
Neutrophil counts	A count of neutrophils, a type of white blood cell, in the blood.
Non-productive cough	Cough with no sputum raised.
POs	Principal Officials under the Accountability System
Oral-faecal transmission	Mode of transmission of pathogens that enter the body via the mouth and are excreted in faeces.
Outbreak	An epidemic limited to localised increase in the incidence of a disease, e.g., in a village, town, or closed institution.
Pathogenesis	The development of morbid conditions or of disease; more specifically the cellular events and reactions and other mechanisms occurring in the development of disease.
Personal protection equipment	Equipments to protect healthcare workers from microorganisms in the healthcare setting.
Plague	An acute febrile disease caused by <i>Yersinia pestis</i> . It is primarily a disease of rodents and is transmitted to man from infected rodents by the bite of fleas, or communicated from patient to patient.
PMH	Princess Margaret Hospital
Prodrome	The symptoms indicating the onset of a disease.
Prognostic factors	Attributes anticipated to be related to the progression and outcome of a disease process.

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Psittacosis	A disease caused by a strain of <i>Chlamydia psittaci</i> , first observed in parrots. When transmitted to man, it usually takes the form of a pneumonia accompanied by fever, cough, and enlargement of spleen.
Public health	The science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life, and promoting health through organised efforts of society.
p-value	The probability that the difference observed in a study could have occurred by chance.
PWH	Prince of Wales Hospital
Randomised controlled trial design	An epidemiologic experiment in which subjects in a population are randomly allocated into groups to receive or not receive an experimental intervention. Randomised controlled trial are generally regarded as the most scientifically rigorous study method.
Recent local transmission	Recent local transmission has occurred when, in the last 20 days, one or more reported probable cases of SARS have most likely acquired their infection locally regardless of the setting in which this may have occurred.
Respiratory droplets	A diminutive drop, such as the particles of moisture, expected in coughing, sneezing, or speaking, which may carry infection to others. They travel only short distance, usually less than 3 feet, before settling.
Ribavirin	A broad-spectrum antiviral drug.
Rickettsia	An individual organism of the family <i>Rickettsiaceae</i> . The organism causes typhus fever in human and is transmitted by mites, fleas, lice or ticks.
SaO₂	SaO ₂ , oxygen saturation, is a measure of the degree to which oxygen is bound to hemoglobin. It is the actual oxygen content divided by the maximum oxygen capacity, given as a percentage.
Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)	Severe acute respiratory syndrome is a viral respiratory illness caused by a coronavirus, called SARS-associated coronavirus (SARS-CoV).

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SHWF	Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food
Standardised mortality ratio (SMR)	The ratio of the number of deaths observed in the study group or population to the number that would be expected if the study population had the same specific rates as the standard population, multiplied by 100.
Steroids	A group of drugs that work through modulation of immune response.
TCM	Traditional Chinese medicine
Triage	The sorting out and classification of causalities to determine priority of need and proper place of treatment.
Universal precautions	Procedures to be followed when healthcare workers anticipated the possibility of infection by a patient.
U-trap	A design in the sewage system to prevent foul smells, insects, and back flow from the soil stack. It must be filled with water in order to function properly.
Viral load	The number of viral particles found in a sample.
Virus	One group of minute infections agents, with certain exception, not resolved in the light microscope. It consists of a nucleic acid (DNA or RNA) and a protein shell, and characterises by a lack of independent metabolism and by the ability to replicate only within living host cells.
WHO	World Health Organization