



Hong Kong College of Paediatricians
香港兒科醫學院
(Incorporated in Hong Kong with Limited Liability)



14 July 2003

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Dr. E K Yeoh, J.P.

Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food
Chairman,
Expert Committee on SARS,
Room 1808, Murray Building,
Garden Road,
Central, Hong Kong.

Dear *Dr Yeoh,*

Expert Committee on SARS

In response to the invitation for public submission on the SARS outbreak, the Hong Kong College of Paediatricians would appreciate your Committee's considerations of the followings with regard to children in the prevention and management of possible future outbreaks of SARS or similar infectious diseases.

We are aware that the Government is renovating public hospitals to provide additional respiratory isolation facilities in case of future outbreaks. Although during the recent episode, the younger children generally fared better than the adults, the adolescents behaved much the same way as their adult counterparts. It is difficult to predict the behaviour of future epidemics of similar or different infectious agents. As children under 18 years comprise one fifth of our population, it is important to include provisions for children in the enhancement of isolation facilities for the care of suspected and confirmed cases of infectious diseases. It is also an opportune time to look into the allocation of space in all children's wards to avoid cross infection where normally the wards have to cater for both the child patients and their parents.

As children are immature, growing and developing, they have special needs especially during hospitalization. Day to day, they depend very much on their carers, whether their parents or hospital personnel. Hence it is important that there is an appropriate staffing ratio for children especially



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under isolation conditions when supervision and monitoring would be expected to be more difficult, and infection control precautions would slow down all therapeutic procedures. The psychosocial needs of children in hospital, accentuated by prolonged periods of isolation or quarantine, have to be addressed. Provision of information appropriate for the age of the child is important. There needs to be special consideration for the visiting policies for children. Their need for education and recreation/play also requires attention. The suspension of volunteer services in hospital brings out the importance of having regularly employed hospital play workers/therapists.

As the importance of infectious diseases has re-emerged, with potential serious consequences, the training of paediatric staff, both medical and nursing in infectious diseases, infection control and intensive care needs enhancement both in number and in depth.

Infectious diseases are of course best prevented obviating the need for treatment or hospitalization. It is opportune that our College has foreseen the benefit of strengthening the training in community paediatrics in revising our training curriculum and requirement. The recent trend of establishing Health Promoting Schools should be encouraged and supported so that both the students and the schools will be ready for any health challenge such as SARS.

We look forward to work hand in hand with the community and the Government to improve the health of our children and build a healthier Hong Kong.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely,
N K Leung

Prof N K Leung

President

Hong Kong College of Paediatricians