

Overview of SARS in Hong Kong

Most the early SARS cases in Hong Kong were from the Prince of Wales Hospital (PWH), which is a teaching hospital of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). In PWH, a total of 24 healthcare workers were reported on 13 March to have shown symptoms of atypical pneumonia. The source and etiology of the disease were unknown at the time, but on 19 March, DH managed to link the first case in PWH to a cluster in the Metropole Hotel. It was established that the first SARS patient in Hong Kong was a man from Guangdong, who had infected at least 7 people in the Metropole Hotel. 6 of the infected guests went on to become first SARS patients in Canada, Singapore and Vietnam; and the infected local resident, who was admitted to the hospital on 4 March, became the first case in PWH.

It was found that the initial outbreak in PWH was amplified by the use of nebuliser treatment on the first SARS patient whose existence was not known until the outbreak became more established. Many health care workers and other patients in the same ward became exposed through this aerosolised means. A detailed account of the transmission route of the Metropole Hotel and PWH clusters can be found in the attached articles from MMWR and New England Journal of Medicine.

On 27 March, 22 residents at the Amoy Gardens residential complex were confirmed to have SARS. By 24 April, on which the last case from Amoy Gardens was reported, a total of 329 residents of the residential complex had been infected. Investigation points to a kidney patient discharged from PWH, who had shown no sign of the disease, as the source of the spread of SARS from PWH to Amoy Gardens. An investigation report released on 17 April showed that the outbreak at Amoy Gardens was exacerbated by a unique set of environmental factors that involved amongst other things a dry U trap, powerful exhaust fan and small bathroom space. These findings were later confirmed by an independent investigation team from WHO. Please see the attached reports for the main findings of the investigations conducted by DH and WHO.

As at 2 June, there are a total of 1,746 confirmed cases in Hong Kong. Of these, 76% or 1,319 patients have recovered and been discharged from

hospital. There have been 282 deaths. The remaining 86 and 59 patients are receiving treatment and convalescing in hospitals respectively. Healthcare workers and residents from the Amoy Gardens residential complex are two groups of people who have been hardest hit by SARS. Out of the 1,746 confirmed cases, 385 (22%) were healthcare workers, 329 (19%) were residents of Amoy Gardens.

The SARS situation in Hong Kong has improved steadily since the middle of April. For the past six weeks, there has been a steady and consistent decline in the number of new cases. Since May 4, the daily reported cases have been in the single digit territory, and since May 11, the number of new cases has been less than five per day. Graphical presentations of key SARS statistics are attached for reference.