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Submission No. 088E

August 18, 2003

SARS Expert Committee
c/o Bureau of Health, Welfare and Food
20/F Murray House
Hong Kong SAR

Dear Committee Members,

I had the chance to work on the SARS investigation in early April this year and subsequently developed a hypothesis that was published in the August 16, 2003 issue of the Lancet. The hypothesis is very specific and testable, provided that field material such as rat serum and live rats from Amoy Gardens or other SARS cluster areas are available for analysis and experiments. I have contacted the Bureau and the Department of Health on several previous occasions but no rat specimen has ever been given to me or my colleagues although the government did release cat specimens to the University of Hong Kong. No laboratory result on rodent investigations at Amoy Gardens has been officially released.

So far we have evidence that the SARS virus can infect man and monkey. Live SARS virus has also been isolated from a house cat at Amoy Gardens. SARS antibody has been detected in a raccoon dog in Shenzhen, and SARS viral footprint by PCR was detected in throat/rectal swabs of dog, civet-cat, and rats. The animal vector hypothesis can explain a lot of the observations and is the most parsimonious of all existing theories. What it lacks is animal evidence. I think it is important to carry out the necessary experiments to verify or refute this hypothesis as soon as possible so that we can know more about the transmission of SARS.

My colleagues at the University of Hong Kong, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] have agreed to perform rat serum antibody tests and [REDACTED] at Columbia University has agreed to do the rat inoculation experiments. It will not take extra efforts or expense on the part of the Hong Kong government to let independent scientists test the animal vector hypothesis.

Yours truly,

Stephen K.C. Ng, MB,BS, DrPH, DABPed

Encl. Lancet paper

CV

Reference letter

** The following attachments were enclosed and withheld from disclosure:

1. An article titled "Possible role of an animal vector in the SARS outbreak at Amoy Gardens" published in *The Lancet* on 16 August 2003
2. Curriculum vitae of Dr Stephen Ng
3. Reference letter of Dr Stephen Ng