

## **ICU Staff SARS Infection.**

6 August 2003

**SARS Expert Committee**  
**Request for Submissions from Hospital Authority (HA)**

The SARS Expert Committee has requested for information on ICU staff infection (Paragraph 1 (B) in Annex to letter of 21 July 2003 from Secretary, SARS Expert Committee):

*"Please provide an analysis of infected ICU staff, including the number of ICU staff who were not involved in intubation, and the number of staff among who had not been working in negative pressure rooms."*

The HA hereby submits the following response:

Among the 321 staff reported to the Labour Department as 'Injury on duty' as at 10 July 2003, 35 staff were postulated to have contracted SARS in SARS Intensive Care Units (SARS ICUs):

Staff postulated to have contracted SARS in SARS ICUs (by staff group)

Staff group	Number
Doctors	7
Nurses	19
Allied Health	1
Health Care Assistants (HCAs)	6
Others	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>

Staff postulated to have contracted SARS in SARS ICUs (by hospital)

Hospital	Number
Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH)	25
Prince of Wales Hospital (PWH)	5
Queen Elizabeth Hospital	3
Tseung Kwan O Hospital (TKOH)	1
Tuen Mun Hospital	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>

The data included all the staff who were postulated by the hospitals to have acquired SARS in SAR-ICUs. The ICUs in the above named hospitals have negative pressure rooms. In the course of their work, staff may be working both in areas with negative pressure and areas not in negative pressure. There is no scientific evidence to suggest that negative pressure rooms are more safe in terms of preventing SARS infection than areas not in negative pressure.

Coronavirus spread by close person-to-person contact. The coronavirus can spread through droplets, aerosolized respiratory secretions and contact with surface contaminated with infectious materials (fomites). In ICU, staff could have been infected through exposure to procedures other than intubation and contacts with fomites. At least 9 staff who were postulated to have acquired SARS in ICU would not have participated in

intubation procedure on patients by virtue of the nature of their duty. On the other hand, many other ICU staff who had participated in intubation of patients had not acquired SARS.