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18 June 2003

Dr. Leong Che-hung, JP
Chairman
Hospital Authority
Hospital Authority Building,
147B Argyle Street,
Kowloon.

Dear Dr. Leong,

Attached is a photocopy each of:

- 1) Shanghai: Dodging the Bullet
- 2) Whatever it Takes

on the subject of how SARS was tackled in Shanghai, which appeared in Beijing Review, May 23, 2003.

The articles are sent to you just in case they have not yet been brought to the attention of the Hospital Authority's seven-member review panel.

According to one of the articles, Shanghai had started to have planning meeting since mid-February on preventing and treating the disease, and to push for "early discovery, early reporting, early quarantine and early treatment".

Sincerely,

Hilton Cheong-Leen
Chairman

Enclosures: 2

cc. The Hon. Yeoh Eng-kiong
Secretary for Health, Welfare & Food
and Chairman of SARS Expert Committee

17.6.2003 pm

- Early government alert
- All-industry mobilization
- Community-level disease monitoring

Shanghai: Dodging The Bullet

By REN XIAOFENG

Guangzhou, Beijing and Shanghai are the three largest cities on the Chinese mainland. After Guangzhou and Beijing tumbled to severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), residents of Shanghai have been straining their ears, wondering if the other shoe would drop and the dreaded epidemic would worm its way into their homes. But until May 12, there were only seven confirmed cases in the city, and locals are hoping they have dodged the bullet.

But the sigh of relief is followed by a baffled silence. How could they have been so lucky? Shanghai has a population of over 16 million and it's China's largest city of industry and commerce. Each day hundreds of thousands of people arrive at

and depart from the metropolis by land, water or air. How does Shanghai manage to keep SARS out?

High Attention

Since mid-February, countless planning meetings have been held on preventing and treating the disease, both among specialists and government officials. Officials attacked SARS before it could attack them, and passed regulations early on to provide a legal basis for the prevention work.

Before any cases were reported in the city, Shanghai borrowed experiences in places like Guangdong. It declared a public health emergency and pushed for "early discovery, early reporting, early quarantine and early treatment."

Shanghai compiled and implemented

a contingency program for preventing and controlling unidentified infectious respiratory diseases, guidelines for the work of preventing and treating SARS, and other documents. Plans were drawn up for special groups, including students on campuses, visitors from outside the city and foreign nationals in Shanghai. A consulting committee composed of specialists was also formed to guide treatment and research.

Based on the Shanghai Disease Prevention and Control Center and the three-level medical protection network, Shanghai established a disease monitoring network and a rapid reaction mechanism. The number of SARS monitoring spots increased from 110 to more than 400 in less than one month. Anytime a patient was suspected of SARS infection,





he or she was separated from other people for observation in accordance with relevant government documents. Community health service centers kept those having close contact with SARS patients under watch for at least 10 days to prevent the disease from spreading.

The First Firewall

At around 8:00 a.m. April 21, a child at the New Century Kindergarten was found with symptoms of SARS and was designated as a "suspected" case. The news spread like fire throughout the kindergarten, neighborhood, the district

education bureau and police station. Thirty minutes later, functionary departments of Xuhui District arrived at the spot, setting out to find the telephone numbers and home addresses of the kindergarten's 126 students and 30-plus staff. Then reports of another child ill with SARS symptoms came in. The district government decided to promptly put the whole kindergarten under a five-day "medical watch." Relevant departments sent special people to the kindergarten every day to measure temperatures, disinfect the area and administer preventive medicine.

The kindergarten stayed closed for five days and reopened April 25 after the hospital announced the sick children were SARS free at 3:00 p.m. Yin Bingxing, head of the school, could start to unwind his tight nerves—he had slept in a car parked just outside for several days.

In the evening of May 4, the Epidemiological Survey Command Center under the Shanghai Disease Prevention and Control Center received a telephone call from the Shanghai Hospital of Infectious Diseases: A couple from the north traveling in Shanghai were ►►

The kindergarten stayed closed for five days and reopened April 25 after the hospital announced the sick children were SARS free at 3:00 p.m.

A Little Luck And a Lot of Work

By LI RONGXIA

Chen Jingxi is an official with the Information Office of the Shanghai Municipal Government. When I called him on May 12, he said he was too busy to give me an interview. According to Chen, his daily work schedule usually finishes at two or three o'clock in the morning.

"Why?" I asked. "We all know that Shanghai's current situation of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) is considerably better than Beijing's."

"That's why we have to work much harder," he answered. "We must prevent spread of the disease to defend citizens' health."

Shanghai and Beijing are both large cities with populations exceeding 13 million. However, any similarities stop when assessing what they have each suffered from SARS. By May 15, Shanghai had reported only seven confirmed SARS cases, compared with 2,388 cases in Beijing. Behind the achievement are timely and decisive precautions to defend China's largest business hub.

Before SARS attacked Shanghai in late April, the city had launched an all-facet and multi-level SARS monitoring and control network and made every endeavor to cut the channels of infection. The municipal government formulated a series of policies and regulations, along with the establishment of a municipal-level expert team and initiation of an emergency medical treatment mechanism as well as safeguard measures in civil aviation, railway and land and water transportation sectors and in communities. Under the network, SARS patients are given immediate

confirmed as SARS patients.

Staff of the center sped to the hospital and arrived 20 minutes later. However, the couple and their children could not recall exactly where they had been to and whom they had met. Their words were even contradictory. The survey team had to interview them separately and then analyze their answers, trying to verify every minute detail. After much effort, the team confirmed seven sites the couple had been to. Emergency response teams swarmed the locations like swat teams, launching full disinfection procedures. The center placed a watch order on 168 people who had had direct and indirect physical contact with the couple. As the couple had been to Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces, the center lost no time informing the respective provincial authorities for disease prevention and control.

Health officials held their breath. Was this the beginning? Had the invasion started? But the quick action paid off. It took only eight hours from discovery of the cases to identifying all the people the couple had contacted. As time passed and no new reports came in, officials began to breathe easier.

Government Decrees

On April 23, the Shanghai Municipal Government unveiled eight measures to strengthen public health. Efforts in SARS monitoring, prevention and treatment were intensified in the city's hotels, recreational sites, schools and residential communities, as well as airports, train and bus stations and docks.

All hotels in Shanghai installed health checks, and all guests had to fill in a health form and have their temperatures taken. All visitors from SARS-affected areas were given rooms on designated floors and buildings separate from the rest.

The International Trade Center, a Sino-Japanese joint venture, is one of the earliest deluxe office buildings in Shanghai and more than 300 companies from over 10 countries and regions are tenants there. Beginning in late April, quite a number of measures were taken to improve ventilation in the buildings.

Every day over 200 flights and over 60 commercial ships arrive at and depart from Shanghai, carrying a total of 20,000 passengers. The daily traffic at Shanghai train stations approximates 200,000 people. Airports, train stations and docks have become the first defense line of Shanghai against SARS.



Beginning in late April, the Shanghai Municipal Government required that all passengers coming and going must report their temperatures and fill in health declaration forms.

The Shanghai Railway Station shut down its air-conditioning system and instead opened all windows of the waiting rooms, which were frequently disinfected. At the entrance the floorings were soaked with disinfectant. There were three medical information points and five testing centers at the train station. The SARS information points provided consulting services and temperature testing to passengers 24 hours a day, while distributing SARS brochures.

The railway authorities gave the working staff facemasks and briefed the attendants on how to spot the symptoms of SARS. Arriving and departing trains were disinfected, and those from affected areas became particular targets of monitoring. Two hours before arriving, each passenger was required to fill in a health declaration form, which contained the passenger's ID number, permanent address, destination, and where they were sitting on the train, so that each and every passenger could be notified in case any SARS patient or suspect was discovered among them.

Hongqiao Airport and Pudong Airport installed and put in use three infrared apparatus for measuring temperature, which rapidly scanned arriving passengers on the spot to ensure that their temperatures were not higher than 37.8 degrees Celsius. The Shanghai Ferry Co. also disinfected its 20-plus waiting areas as well as all its ships. At road junctions



Liu Jun (second left), Director of the Shanghai Municipal Health Bureau, introduces the city's SARS control measures to the WHO investigation team headed by James Maguire (first right)

of highways to Nanjing and Hangzhou, police officers, epidemic prevention workers, and staff of Shanghai's land transport authorities were on duty 24 hours a day. They distributed brochures on the prevention of SARS to passing vehicles and recorded whether people on these vehicles had been to epidemic areas. Vehicles from hard-hit areas were the focus of inspection.

Floors of subway stations and the rails on the trains were sprayed and scrubbed with diluted acetate peroxide twice a day. The magnetic cards for subway fares were cleansed one by one daily. All the 8,000 buses in the city were disinfected twice a day. For the 50,000 taxis, mats and seat covers were regularly changed and parts such as doorknobs were disinfected every day.

In recent years the seven-day May Day holiday has become a "golden week for tourism." During last year's holiday, Shanghai received 3.6 million visitors, bringing in lots of money for travel agencies. Before the holiday this year, the Shanghai Municipal Tourism Commission required that all travel agencies in Shanghai should stop organizing cross-province/city travels and cautioned travel agencies outside Shanghai not to organize travel to Shanghai. Star-level hotels and tourism-oriented reception units were instructed to suspend reservations for wedding banquets or other large-scale dinner parties. Despite the loss in profits, Shanghai's travel agencies made the sacri-

fice canceling programs and refunding customers.

On April 24, the 10th Shanghai International Auto Industry Expo closed ahead of schedule. Complying with the request of the exposition's organizing committee, participants quickly dismantled the booths and left as soon as possible. Those who had bought tickets but had no chance to visit the expo were given refunds.

Changing Schedules, Lifestyles

A friendly handshake or hug used to be the preferred greeting among friends in Shanghai. Nowadays, a nod or a traditional gesture of cupping hands before the chest seems to do. But nobody is offended. In fact they say they prefer it. It not only shows respect for the other person but it also shows consideration for public health.

Most people are wearing facemasks on the subway or while shopping and staff in all restaurants, including McDonald's, are required to wear facemasks and gloves. Customers in restaurants divide food into individual portions like Westerners. In nurseries, kindergartens, primary schools and middle schools, children and students have their temperatures taken regularly and reported to health authorities. Employees returning from business trips are required to stay home a few days for observation.

Preventive actions are in full swing in many residential districts in the city. In Huangpu District in downtown Shanghai,

treatment, and all infected persons and places are effectively quarantined.

So far, the efforts have paid off, offering a protective umbrella to local residents and visitors from home and abroad.

Experts sent by the World Health Organization (WHO) endorsed city efforts at a press conference there on April 25, and said Shanghai had been successful in containing SARS.

Though the city's anti-SARS system still has room for improvement and we have given suggestions on this, the system works well, said James Maguire, head of the five-member WHO investigation team.

According to Maguire, the municipal government has made great efforts to increase the capacity of the health system and enhance SARS-related publicity and public education, and hospitals have adopted effective measures to keep themselves from becoming sources of infection.

During their inspection, the WHO experts interviewed medical staff, government officials and SARS patients and reviewed documentation of all confirmed and suspected cases in the city. Keiji Fukuda, a WHO expert, said they were given free access to people and places they wanted to meet and visit.

Li Ailan, another WHO expert, praised hospitals the experts visited for drawing on the experiences of Guangdong and Beijing and adopting strict early quarantine measures.

That doesn't mean Guangdong and Beijing should be blamed, the expert said, because their failure was mainly due to not knowing enough about the deadly virus in the initial days.

However, the WHO experts asked Shanghai to maintain its vigilance against SARS, as they attributed the small number of cases in the city to its deliberate precautions and a bit of luck.

"SARS is not a worldwide epi-

demical yet and the incidence of the disease is quite different in different regions," said Daniel Chin, member of the WHO investigation team.

More importantly, Chin said, Shanghai had established a safeguard network before the outbreak of the disease, and had effectively dealt with cases found so far. The WHO experts were deeply impressed by the city's emergency measures and the overtime work of health officials and medical workers to help SARS prevention at grassroots level, he added.

Though Shanghai's health system operates well for the moment, the WHO experts said it is likely to fall short of needs if there is a substantial jump of SARS cases.

"For instance, when a recent suspected case was reported a few days ago, 168 contacts were found out immediately and put under observation by the district-based disease prevention and control centers. When a larger number of cases are reported in the city, we are not sure if the local system can still cope with that situation," Chin said.

The expert said that nobody had estimated Beijing would have so many SARS cases two months ago and it indicated that a big city with a huge mobile population is very possible to suffer severely from the virus.

It would be a "real test," warned Chin.

Saying the city still faces a severe epidemic situation, Shanghai Mayor Han Zheng called on all departments not to slack off their duties.

"We will continue to put all protective measures into strict practice to cut the channels of infection," Han reiterated, adding the city has well prepared for a lasting battle against SARS and will carry out the prevention and control work more effectively, orderly and efficiently to safeguard people's health and safety. ■



HELPING HAND: An American couple living in Shanghai donate 2,000 yuan to the city's Anti-SARS Fund on April 30. In one and half days after the fund was established by the Shanghai Charity Fund, it had received donations worth 5 million yuan

100,000 brochures on SARS prevention were taken by neighborhood leaders for distribution among residents. In Daning Neighborhood, Zhabei District, where more than half of residents are migrants, the neighborhood committee went door-to-door offering information and guidance on SARS prevention.

Awareness of SARS prevention is enhanced along with the city's efforts to fight against it. The Wang family living on Fuxing Zhonglu (road) recently had their daughter-in-law and granddaughter visit them from outside Shanghai. So they took the initiative to report this to the neighborhood committee. The whole family took their temperatures every day. According to the heads of some kindergartens, now parents are more responsible that they would have their children stay at home if they show signs of a cold.

Facemasks and self-imposed isolation are not signs of a panic, said local officials. Xu Genshun, a manager of the New Jinjiang Hotel, said that the actions are nothing but a preventive measure. Residents seem aware that the disease is not an instant death sentence and keeping up good general health can prevent infection, said Xu.

At the disinfection station of Jing'ansi Neighborhood, Yang Baosheng and his co-workers, armed with greenish eye-protectors, emulsion gloves, long white gowns and facemasks, diluted the yellowish acetate peroxide with water at the ratio of 1:100. When Yang took off the

gloves, he showed several burns on his right hand from the powerful chemicals.

In the morning of May 4, Yang and his co-workers disinfected an old factory building, the Ziguang Plaza and the neighboring Yanjiazhai green belt. The five-story old factory building was spacious and relatively easy for them because they could use electric sprayers. Smaller rooms in the commercial building were harder for the workers, because they had to disinfect them by hand, especially places like toilets, elevators, wall-corners and potted plants. As for the green belt of Yanjiazhai, the main targets were the fitness apparatus. Chen Ronggen, 77, who was doing exercises there, said, "These workers work very hard and we're very grateful to them."

The disinfection station, with 10 employees, is situated in a small lane on Urumqi Lu (road). Beginning in April, with the start of the anti-SARS battle, the station became very busy. Xu Peifang, head of the station, said, "Now we don't have any holiday. We work 12 hours a day and sometimes we go out to disinfect as early as 5:30 a.m. and as late as 11:00 p.m. We use 500 kg of disinfectant a day."

According to a source from the Shanghai Bureau of Labor and Social Security, more than 170 neighborhoods in the city have established community health and sanitation service centers, and each of the 3,500-plus neighborhood committees has four to six people specialized in disinfection. ■

Whatever It Takes

Shanghai hospitals use any way possible to prevent and cure SARS

By REN XIAOFENG

Though only six confirmed SARS cases had been reported in Shanghai until early May, medical institutions there are in a state of high vigilance.

Shanghai currently has four hospitals designated for the treatment of SARS patients. Apart from that, fever clinics and isolation wards were set up by other medical institutions in the city, as well as special emergency mechanism for medical treatment. In addition, the city chose 60 specially trained medical workers from local hospitals to establish reserves, who are ready to aid the frontline of defense whenever necessary. Shanghai has also attached high importance to preventing SARS infections among medical workers, and so far they have been successful.

Shanghai Municipal Government Secretary General Xue Peijian pledged that medical institutions in the city will make all efforts to cure SARS patients, and that patients who cannot afford their treatment will be helped by the government.

Heavy Responsibility

"My heart sinks at telephone rings these days, because they usually mean another consultation is waiting for me," said Professor Deng Weiwu, member of Shanghai's expert team on SARS and a renowned expert on respiratory diseases with Ruijin Hospital. "I always feel heavy responsibility when facing each diagnosis."

It's an unusual time for Shanghai Infectious Disease Hospital. Starting from April 14, Cui Jie, a head nurse in the infectious department of the hospital, and her colleagues, have worked in the isolation section for SARS patients. The seven-member crew cares for patients round-the-clock while rotating their work in three shifts, making a monotonous and busy daily life. "Every morning at eight o'clock, I go to the isolation ward after taking over the work from my night shift colleagues," Cui said. "My routine work includes arranging medical records, receiving new patients, adjusting doctors' advices according to actual situation,

sending medicines, drawing blood from them, giving injections, taking body temperatures, measuring blood and oxygen saturation, as well as other nursing duties like bathing SARS patients, feeding them and emptying their bedpans. Each time when I finish my work and get out of the ward, my clothes are drenched from sweat and I always feel dizzy due to the hard work."

The Huashan Hospital affiliated with Shanghai Fudan University has 24 doctors and 11 nurses in its infectious disease department. In front of the entrance of the hospital's outpatient emergency hall is a working table emblazoned with a red sign of "fever pre-check," where two nurses who wear facemasks and protective caps take temperatures.

Once patients who claim to have symptoms of fever and cough come there, they are given facemasks and are interviewed by doctors. Some easily identified as suffering from other diseases may be confirmed as SARS free. But if there are any doubts, the doctor on duty will call the hospital's SARS expert team members to give a preliminary diagnosis; if some questions still exist, experts will report it to the department for prevention and protection or the head doctor on duty of the hospital.

The patient is simply told, "You should stay in hospital for further observation, and of course so far we just have some suspicions about your physical condition." Then accompanied by designated medical workers, the probable SARS patient will be sent to an isolation ward of the hospital. The hospital will immediately inform local center for disease control, and send the information card about the patient to the center within six hours, as well as collect the patient's blood samples and deliver it to the center for testing within 24 hours.

Doctors from the center will come to the hospital to diagnose the patient. Suspected SARS case will be transferred to a designated hospital. Otherwise, the patient will remain staying in the current ►►



Doctors from Huashan Hospital give a lecture on SARS prevention to residents of Jing'ansi Neighborhood



Medical workers fight SARS on the frontlines, giving Shanghai a solid protection network

wards for further and close observation. If everything goes well, he or she will be discharged from the hospital later.

Huashan Hospital's isolation area includes 18 beds, and patients are separated. Air conditioners have been replaced with ventilating fans, all sickbeds are brand-new, and several breathing machines are equipped. Doctors check patients in their wards. Patients who need further testing are escorted through designated passages and then whatever equipment they require, like X-ray machines, are strictly sterilized. In the hospital, special workers are in charge of disinfection, isolation and disposal of contaminated waste.

Professor Zhang Yongxin, head of the SARS prevention and treatment leading group with the Huashan Hospital and Director of the Infectious Department, said they will seriously treat every suspected SARS patient, and prevent others from cross-infection.

Traditional Therapies

Doctors of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) are being included in the fight against SARS.

Since the beginning of this year, when SARS cases were confirmed in several

southern cities, some Shanghai TCM doctors have joined in the fight against the disease. Among them is professor Shen Qingfa, Director of the Epidemic Febrile Disease Teaching and Research Office with Shanghai TCM University, who attended the clinical study on preventing SARS by using traditional methods together with his counterparts in Guangzhou.

At the invitation of Guangdong Provincial TCM Hospital, 84-year-old Yan Dexin, a famous Shanghai TCM doctor, also threw himself into the work of diagnosing SARS cases in Guangdong.

All SARS patients who were treated with the aid of traditional methods saw a shortened time of fever and hospitalization, and the traditional medicine also effectively put some grave cases under control.

Since the first suspected SARS case was reported in Shanghai, some TCM experts on epidemic and respiratory diseases have expressed their hopes to combat the disease on the frontlines. To answer their requirements, the municipal health authorities, with the help of Shanghai Society of Traditional Chinese Medicine, organized related experts to

form an expert team for SARS prevention and treatment on April 14.

The newly established expert team immediately began to study and analyze the epidemic based on traditional methods. They drew on Guangdong's experiences on SARS control and studied ancient contagious disease prevention methods to devise prescriptions that can help healthy people resist the epidemic while strengthening their immunity according to Shanghai's actual condition. The prescriptions are greeted eagerly by the public.

The experts also proposed a solution on SARS prevention and treatment by means of traditional methods and an emergency personnel training plan for local hospitals. Wu Yingen and Shao Changrong, two members of the expert team, had participated in the consultation of the first foreign SARS patient in Shanghai. In order to get accurate information for diagnosis and treatment, 71-year-old expert Zhang Yunpeng insisted on personally observing the tongue of a suspected SARS patient from the United States, in spite of the risk of being infected. His professional spirit greatly moved both the patient and medical workers present.