

CONFIDENTIAL

16 February 2004

Miss Flora TAI
Clerk to Select Committee
The Legislative Council
HKSAR
Fax: 22482011

Dear Miss TAI,

I refer to your letter dated 6 February 2004 about the inquiry into the handling of SARS outbreak by the Government and the Hospital Authority.

Enclosed please find my written statement on the specified areas of study, including response to the questions set out in Appendix IV, and details of my professional qualifications and experience.

Yours sincerely,



Dr SO Man-kit, Thomas
Princess Margaret Hospital

Appendix IV

Please respond to the following questions in your written statement -

1. What are your role and duties as a Senior Medical Officer of the Infectious Disease Team of the Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH)? What were your specific responsibilities in the handling of the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) at PMH?
I am principally responsible for supervision of the clinical activities and training of residents in the infectious disease team, management of inpatients and outpatients as an infectious disease physician and assist in the administrative work under the leadership of the consultant-in-charge.
2. Were you involved in the discussion on the designation of PMH as a SARS hospital? If not, why not? If yes, what views did you express?
I was not involved in the discussion as I was a frontline clinical staff.
3. Were you involved in making the necessary preparations to turn PMH to be a SARS hospital? If not, why not? If yes, for what preparations were you responsible? How much time were you given to make the preparations? Was the time given sufficient to make such preparations? If not, did you ask for more time?
No. The Hospital Management Committee and Department Management Committee of the Department of Medicine & Geriatrics were involved, and I was not a member in either one.
4. Did you consider PMH ready to serve as a SARS hospital on 29 March 2003? If not, why not? Did you raise your concern with the hospital management? If yes, what was the response? Who made the decision that PMH should commence to serve as a SARS hospital despite the fact that there was not sufficient time to make the necessary preparations?
When I first learned that PMH would serve as a SARS Hospital from 29 March 2003 onwards, I personally felt that we could manage provided we were supported accordingly in terms of resources, and this should be reviewed from time to time. The view has been raised in forums on 27 & 28 March 2003 by colleagues. The response from the managerial sector was receptive.
5. Did any healthcare workers (HCWs) under your charge contract SARS during the outbreak at PMH? If yes, how and why were they affected? When was the first of such cases reported to you? What was your response to the situation? Did you inform the hospital management immediately? If not, why not? If yes, what was their response? How many HCWs under your charge were infected during the SARS outbreak at PMH? Did you make an assessment of why these HCWs had fallen ill with SARS? If not, why not? If yes, what was the assessment?
As I did not have the first-hand information, I would like to refer the answer of

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this question to the Chief of Service, Department of Medicine & Geriatrics, Princess Margaret Hospital.

6. A series of staff forums were held for the Kowloon West Cluster commencing 27 March 2003. Did you attend these forums? If not, why not? If yes, what was your assessment of the usefulness of these forums?

I have attended most of the forums, which were useful in delivering the ongoing changes operationally and providing a platform for exchange of expertise and views amongst different sectors from top management to frontline staff.

7. A control and coordinating centre commenced operation at PMH on 31 March 2003. Did you know what the role and functions of this centre were? Did you know why it was necessary to set up this centre when the New Territories West Regional Office of the Department of Health had already set up a control centre at PMH on 28 March 2003? Did you know what was the working relationship between the two centres and what information was exchanged between the two centres?

To my understanding, the control and coordinating centre at PMH was responsible for data collection and processing of the PMH inpatients. The control centre of Department of Health was responsible for collation of data and surveillance on a territory-wide basis.

8. On 7 April 2003, PMH stopped the admission of SARS patients from all hospitals except Yan Chai Hospital and Caritas Medical Centre. Who made the decision and what were the considerations? In which forum was the decision made and who were involved in the discussion? Were you involved in the discussion? If not, why not? If yes, what views did you express? Why was the decision not made earlier?

I was not involved and I believe that the decision would be made at the interhospital management or higher level.

9. On 7 April 2003, PMH began transferring SARS patients to Wong Tai Sin Hospital for convalescence. In which forum was the decision made and who were involved in the discussion? Who made the decision and what were the considerations? Were you involved in the discussion? If not, why not? If yes, what views did you express? Why was the decision taken at that point in time?

I was not involved and I believe that the decision would be made at the interhospital management level.

10. Were there any step-down arrangements for patients before they were transferred out? If not, why not? If yes, when were the step-down arrangements put in place?

The transfer of patients to Wong Tai Sin Hospital since 7 April 2003 for convalescence and rehabilitation was the step-down measure.

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11. On 11 April 2003, PMH stopped admission of new SARS cases. In which forum was the decision made and who were involved in the discussion? Who made the decision and what were the considerations? Were you involved in the discussion? If not, why not? If yes, what views did you express? Why was the decision taken at that point in time?

I was not involved and I believe that the decision was made at the Head Office management level.

12. On 11 April 2003, PMH began transferring "potential intensive care unit" patients to other hospitals. Were they non-SARS patients? In which forum was the decision made and who were involved in the discussion? Who made the decision and what were the considerations? Were you involved in the discussion? If not, why not? If yes, what views did express? Why was the decision taken at that point in time?

They were SARS-infected patients who despite treatment were on the verge of deterioration and likely to require mechanical ventilation and intensive care support. I believe that the decision was made at the interhospital management level to relieve the burden of demand for the intensive care support in PMH.

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Statement on the specified areas of study

- (i) preparedness and readiness of PMH to serve as a SARS hospital

I would like to refer to the response in Appendix IV

- (ii) infection control measures in PMH during the SARS outbreak

The infection control measures were implemented in PMH in line with the head office guideline. There were instruction course on infection control(IC) against SARS and PPE training to the staff, followed by taped video playing in the public areas. The information was accessible from hospital intranet. There were zoning of clean and dirty clinical areas, with posting of signage and flyer reinforcing on the practice of IC on site. Implementation was monitored by a patrol posted outside each ward, 2 senior medical officers within the Department of Medicine & Geriatrics, and infection control team of the hospital. Ventilation and bed spacing in the wards were improved. Quarters were provided to the medical staff. Sick bay was offered to staff who had febrile illness.

- (iii) infection of healthcare workers in PMH

I would like to refer to the response in Appendix IV