

Health, Welfare & Food Bureau
SARS Bulletin
(30 May 2003)

Summary of Cases

On 29 May, 7 more patients with Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) had recovered from the disease and been discharged from hospitals, hence increasing the total number of recovered patients to 1,302 (i.e., 75.2% of all 1,732 SARS cases). Out of the 1,732 cases, 381 involved health care workers or medical students. There were 157 SARS patients remaining in hospitals, in which 65 patients were undergoing convalescence before discharge and 32 patients were receiving treatment in the intensive care units. There were 8 suspected cases under treatment, and the cumulative total of fatal cases was 273.

2. On 29 May, 2 more patients were confirmed to have SARS. Since 16 May, the daily number of newly confirmed SARS cases has fallen below 5 for the 14th consecutive day, and the average number of newly confirmed cases in the past week was 1 per day.

3. Based on the information available, the distribution of onset date and residential district of 1,696 patients is shown in the Figure in page 2. About 1% of cases had onset date in February, 57% in March, 38% in April and 4% in May. The distribution of cases with onset in May is shown in the Table in page 3. Here are some key observations: -

- In 9 Districts (including Central & Western, Eastern, Southern, Wan Chai, Kowloon City, Kwun Tong, Wong Tai Sin, Sai Kung and Sha Tin), more than 50% of cases in the District had onset date in March.
- In 6 Districts (including Sham Shui Po, Tai Po, Kwai Tsing, Tsuen Wan, Tuen Mun and Yuen Long), more than 50% of cases in the District had onset date in April.
- For the remaining 3 Districts (including Yau Tsim Mong, Islands and Northern), most of the cases had their onset date in March and April, but the distribution was rather even.

- Among the 62 cases with onset date in May, none was in the Islands and Wan Chai Districts, 13 cases were in Sha Tin District, 8 cases in Northern District, and from 1 to 5 cases in the other 14 Districts.
- Fourteen out of the 18 Districts registered no case with onset date in the past 2 weeks (i.e., 16 to 29 May). In the remaining 4 Districts (including Northern, Tai Po, Kwai Tsing and Yuen Long), there was only one case each with onset date in the past two weeks.

Figure: Distribution of onset date by districts

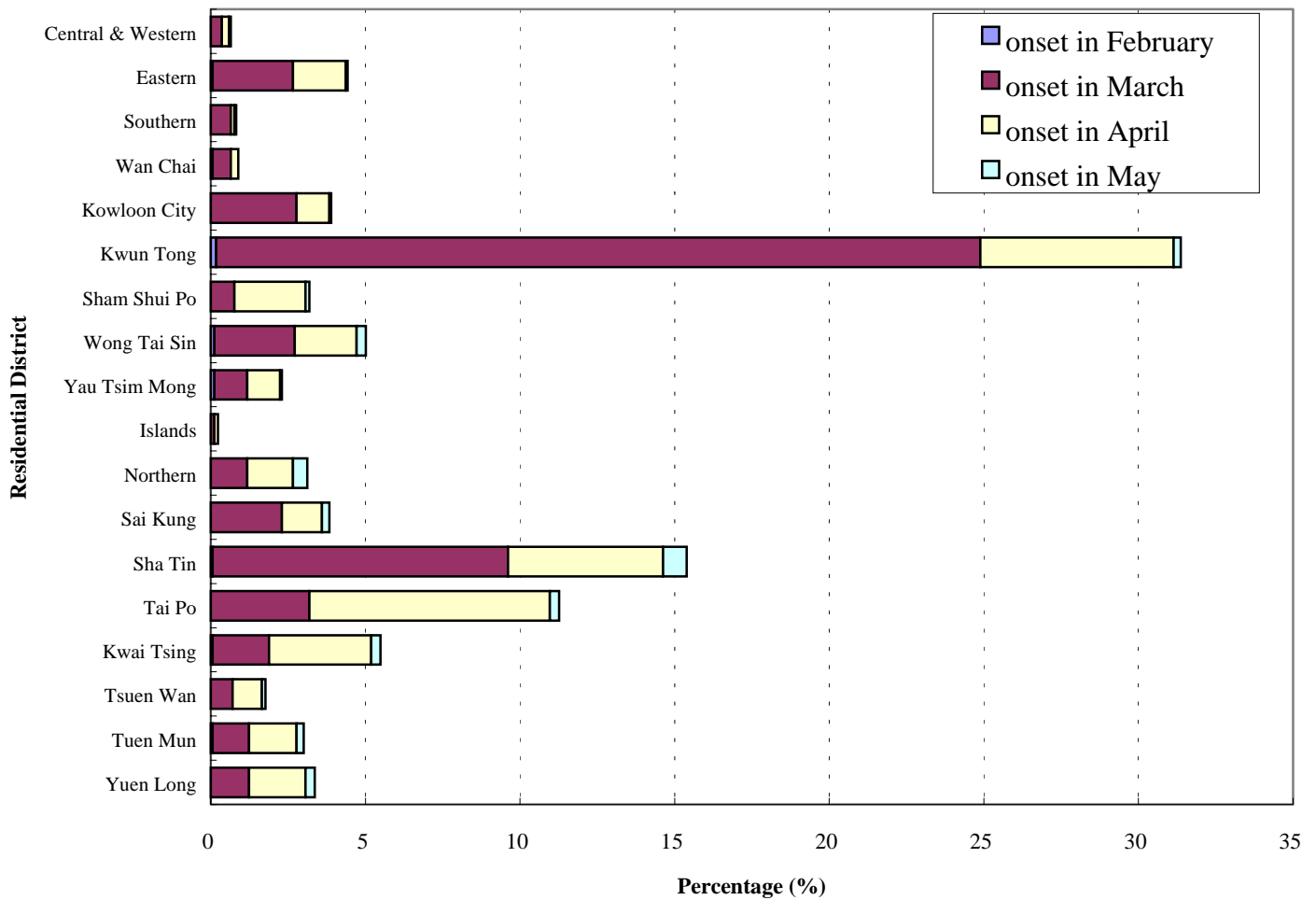


Table: Cases with known onset dates in May 2003

District	1/5 - 15/5	16/5 - 29/5	District	1/5 - 15/5	16/5 - 29/5
Central & Western	1	0	Islands	0	0
Eastern	1	0	Northern	7	1
Southern	1	0	Sai Kung	4	0
Wan Chai	0	0	Sha Tin	12	1
Kowloon City	1	0	Tai Po	4	1
Kwun Tong	4	0	Kwai Tsing	4	1
Sham Shui Po	2	0	Tsuen Wan	2	0
Wong Tai Sin	5	0	Tuen Mun	4	0
Yau Tsim Mong	1	0	Yuen Long	4	1

Latest Development

Chinese medicine in preventing and treating SARS

4. The Hospital Authority (HA) has set up a Chinese Medicine Expert Panel on SARS Exploratory Treatment, which comprises local and Mainland experts in Chinese medicine and other experts from the HA and Department of Health (DH), to coordinate the use of Chinese medicine in the treatment of SARS.

5. Two Chinese medicine experts from the Chinese Medicine Hospital of Guangdong Province, Professor Lin Lin and Professor Yang Zhimin, arrived Hong Kong in early May to provide expert advice on the use of Chinese medicine in treating SARS patients. They have experience in using an integrated Western Medicine/Chinese Medicine (WM/CM) approach to treat SARS patients in Guangzhou. Since arrival, they have been working closely with Chinese medicine experts from the three local universities which offer Chinese medicine programmes to develop relevant clinical and research protocols using the model of WM/CM collaboration for SARS treatment. As at May 24, the two experts have conducted a total of 78 consultations for 29 patients in 9 acute hospitals. They have also interviewed 37 patients in convalescence, among whom 11 have been recruited to participate in the clinical study for convalescing patients.

6. The Expert Panel has formulated research and treatment protocols for the prevention and treatment of SARS, which are being implemented in HA hospitals

for SARS patients as appropriate. In addition to treating SARS patients, HA has arranged the use of prophylaxis Chinese medicines for its frontline staff.

Ongoing Development

Health Checks at Border Points

7. Since 29 March, medical posts have been set up at the airport, ports and border points to watch for travellers displaying symptoms of SARS, and all incoming passengers are required to complete a health declaration. Temperature checks for all arriving, departing and transit passengers at the Hong Kong International Airport have also been implemented since mid-April.

8. As regards other control points, arriving passengers via ports and land boundary crossings are subject to temperature screening in addition to health declaration with effect from 26 April. Since mid-May, departing passengers from the Hong Kong Macao Ferry Terminal and the China Ferry Terminal, and all passengers departing for the Mainland by through trains are required to undergo temperature checks before leaving Hong Kong. In addition, all close contacts of confirmed SARS patients are barred from leaving Hong Kong during their home confinement period.

9. As at 29 May, 2 passengers had been confirmed to have SARS since the implementation of all the above health checking measures.

Home Confinement

10. All household contacts of confirmed or suspected SARS patients are required to undergo home confinement for monitoring and treatment up to a maximum of 10 days. As at 29 May, 29 persons (from 8 households) were under this home confinement requirement. So far a total of 1,234 persons (from 484 households) had been affected by this requirement, of whom 33 of them were later confirmed to have SARS.

Health Advice/Further Information

Wearing Mask

11. SARS can be transmitted by respiratory droplets over a short distance or through direct contact with a patient's secretions. To prevent contracting the disease, it is important to observe good personal hygiene and build up body immunity by developing a healthy lifestyle. Wearing a mask properly offers satisfactory protection against SARS and other respiratory tract infections, and is one of the ways to prevent spread of the infection. Surgical masks, if properly worn, are effective in preventing the spread of droplet infections. The following people should wear a facemask:

- People with respiratory infection symptoms.
- People who care for patients with respiratory infection symptoms.
- People who have been in close contact with confirmed or suspected SARS patients should wear a mask for at least 10 days from the last contact.
- People visiting clinics or hospitals.
- Health care workers in clinical settings.
- Workers handling food.
- Public transport operational staff.
- People at crowded or poorly ventilated places.
- Pupils and staff at schools. (Except during physical education lessons or in a well-ventilated and spacious venue with no "short distance face-to-face activity" involved.)

12. As the list cannot be exhaustive, members of the public are reminded to exercise judgement in accordance with guidance given above. In general, anyone who feels the need to wear a mask is advised to do so, and please remember:

- Always keep a mask handy so that you can put one on as the need arises.

- Wash hands before putting on a facemask, before and after taking one off.
- Follow the instructions given by the supplier.

13. More information on wearing mask is available at the following web page: <http://www.info.gov.hk/dh/diseases/ap/eng/facemask.htm>.

Further Information

14. To empower the public in fighting against the SARS, DH has issued advices and guidelines on prevention of the disease for various sectors. Publicity programmes have been made to educate the public on all aspects of the disease, including the symptoms, the mode of transmission, the importance of seeking early treatment and various preventive measures namely personal and environmental hygiene. Health education information is available on the 24-hour pre-recorded hotlines (2833 0111) and has been uploaded onto a designated webpage of DH (<http://www.info.gov.hk/info/sars/eindex.htm>). A hotline (187 2222) has also been provided for public enquiries.

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Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region