



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部衛生福利及食物局  
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau  
Government Secretariat, Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region  
The People's Republic of China

---

23 June 2003

Dear Colleagues,

The World Health Organisation's announcement today to remove Hong Kong from the list of areas with recent local transmission marks a milestone in Hong Kong's fight against Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). Every member of the community is to be commended for their cooperation and support in this battle but, most of all, I would like to thank all colleagues in the health care sector for bringing this disease under control.

Back in March we were confronted with a new disease of which we had little knowledge. Despite our efforts we were unable to prevent an epidemic, with 1755 members of the community infected and 296 deaths. The epidemic has caused much pain and suffering and has been at great cost. Our colleagues in the health sector bore the brunt of the epidemic. 386 of those infected were health care workers. Amid anxieties and worries about the unknown and the risk of contracting the disease, our health care colleagues persevered in their work with courage.

The WHO's commendation of Hong Kong's heroic work in containing the SARS outbreak is an apt description of all health care workers, in both public and private sectors, who fought so bravely at the forefront of the battlefield. Your courage, professionalism and selflessness have won the highest respect of the community. You have indeed exemplified the best qualities of humankind. The eight colleagues who died in this epidemic will long live in our memories and will be a stark reminder of the need to

better protect our colleagues from infectious diseases. It is with a heavy heart that I join the community in extending my deepest sympathy and condolence to their families.

In unity and faith, the health care sector has risen to the recent challenge of SARS but the threat of infectious diseases will never go away. New diseases caused by unknown agents may again catch us by surprise if we do not keep up our vigilance. To gear ourselves up for any future outbreaks, we are embarking on a number of initiatives to strengthen our public health care system and prevention and management of infectious diseases in the shortest time possible. In addition to the \$200 million allocated for treatment of diseases, strengthening infection control and public health education, we will seek approval for another \$200 million to create a fund in the Hospital Authority to provide training in infectious disease control for health care staff and assistance to health care staff infected with SARS. We will also be seeking additional funds to implement environmental improvement measures in our hospitals and enhancement of our isolation facilities in the short term. To strengthen our research capacity, we will seek \$500 million of funding to establish a foundation in support of local universities and research institutions in conducting further medical researches – be it in the field of SARS or other infectious diseases.

I am confident that you will stand by staunchly in the continuing battle against emerging infectious diseases to protect the health of our community. May I thank you all once again.



(Dr E K Yeoh)

Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food