

CASE DEFINITION OF SEVERE ACUTE RESPIRATORY SYNDROME (SARS)

WHO definition of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS)

SUSPECT CASE:

A person presenting after 1st Feb, 2003 with history of

- High fever > 38°C;

AND

- ONE OR MORE respiratory symptoms : cough, Shortness of breath (SOB), difficulty in breathing;

AND

- ONE OR MORE of the following:
 - ◆ close contact* with a person diagnosed as SARS
 - ◆ recent travel to areas reporting cases of SARS

PROBABLE CASE:

A suspect case with Chest X-ray (CXR) findings of pneumonia or respiratory distress syndrome

OR

Person with unexplained respiratory illness resulting in death with an autopsy examination exhibiting pathology of respiratory distress syndrome without identifiable cause

* Close contact means having cared for, lived with, or having had direct contact with respiratory secretions or body fluids of a person with SARS.

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MINISTRY OF HEALTH
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Advisory For Doctors on Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome

SARS

SEVERE ACUTE RESPIRATORY SYNDROME (SARS)

Since February 2003, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has reported outbreaks of a severe form of pneumonia in Guangdong Province in China, Hong Kong and Vietnam. More recently similar cases have also been reported in Singapore and Canada. This illness is now termed as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

The illness presents initially with flu-like illness but can progress to severe pneumonia, respiratory distress and death. Thus far no definite aetiological agent has been identified.

In view of the large number of Malaysians visiting these areas and vice-versa, certain precautions and procedures are necessary.

What should you do if you encounter a patient with flu-like symptoms and who has recently returned from the affected areas.

- a. Reassure the patient. Stress that most flu-like illnesses are not serious and will resolve spontaneously or with simple medication.
- b. However in view of the current situation, certain precautions have to be taken and the patient should be advised to seek treatment at a hospital immediately if he develops high fever and difficulty in breathing.
- c. Patients who have recently returned from the affected areas and present with high fever and difficulty in breathing should be referred to a hospital for further management.
- d. Cases that meet the definition of suspected SARS, should be notified using the following procedures:
 - complete the notification form KKM/BKPISARS/2003/1.
 - send the notification form to the District Health Office by fax on the same day. If a fax is not available inform the District Health Office by phone.