

Editorial Note: In response to media queries on the SARS situation, the SMA Council issued the following press release to all media agencies on 28 March 2003. This was later printed in the Straits Times Forum on 1 April.

SMA PRESS RELEASE

We have several requests from the media on SMA's opinion on SARS outbreak in Singapore and the government's handling of the situation.

In response to these queries, SMA is issuing the following press release.

In relation to SARS, Singaporeans should take note that we are at the cutting edge of medicine, but SARS is a new disease. There is no definitive source of authority or experience we can learn from. Other afflicted areas such as China, Hong Kong, Vietnam are also learning about the disease every day. Given this background, SMA is more than convinced that the government has done all it can in the light of imperfect and incomplete information on SARS. We note that the government has been very decisive, adequate and pro-active in its management of the outbreak by the following actions:

- a) to inform doctors and public regularly of the disease outbreak, notably the epidemiological aspects of the disease and the infection control measures necessary to block transmission of the disease;
- b) to limit the spread among healthcare workers through active surveillance;
- c) to control transmission through contacts by implementing home quarantine;
- d) to control transmission through more susceptible groups in the public e.g. children through temporary closure of schools;
- e) to contain sources of transmission (i.e. patients) in one location (i.e. TTSH) so as to keep other hospitals hopefully SARS-free; The SMA fully supports these measures undertaken thus far by the MOH.

Besides the decisive administrative leadership shown by the MOH, the SMA would also like to acknowledge and encourage the members of the medical, nursing, and other healthcare professionals who are fighting this new threat on a daily basis, even at the risk of their own health. The effort and personal sacrifice of all involved in this outbreak, administration and front-line staff alike, have done our Nation proud.

Yours sincerely

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President

Singapore Medical Association