

News from SMA Council

By Dr Tham Tat Yean, Honorary Secretary

1. DONATION OF SURGICAL MASKS

The Council wishes to acknowledge and express its appreciation to **Medtecs Asia Pacific Pte Ltd** for generously sponsoring 15,000 pieces of 3-ply surgical masks for distribution to private clinics. These were distributed to SMA Members in complimentary packs of 50 masks in May, on a first-come-first-served basis. Members were notified by email. The 15,000 pieces were snapped up within 3 days.

2. MEDICAL SUPPLIES FAIR & MASK FIT TESTING

Two Medical Supplies Fairs were held on Saturday afternoons: 7 and 14 June 2003, from 2 to 5 pm, at the Alumni Auditorium. The Fairs were for doctors and dentists to purchase infection control medical supplies at attractive rates. We have made contacts with these suppliers through a meeting with International Enterprises Singapore. Medical supplies sold included N95/FFP2 respirator masks, 3-ply surgical masks, gloves (non-sterile), disposable gowns, goggles, thermal scan covers, alcohol hand rubs, wipes and swabs.

3M and Draeger were present to carry out mask fit testing during the two days. Thus far, a total of 150 doctors and clinic staff have attended the mask fitting tests.

To date, the SMA has organised 10 mask fit testing sessions (8 sessions were held after the SARS Preventive Measures Courses from 17 May to 25 May 2003).

Two more mask fit testing sessions for users of Draeger masks were organised on Saturday afternoons: 28 June and 5 July 2003, from 2 to 4 pm at the SMA Secretariat.

We are grateful to 3M and Draeger for their support in conducting all these mask fit testing sessions. ■

3. PATIENT DECLARATION FORM (PDF)

SMA first heard about the Patient Declaration Form (PDF) on **24 June 2003**, when members called to provide feedback for the MOH Directive on SARS and the PDF, which was to be implemented on 26 June. We requested for a copy of both items, and received them later that evening.

On the morning of **25 June 2003**, the SMA Secretariat received more telephone calls and emails from members. That afternoon, the SMA Honorary Secretary rushed an official letter to the Director of Medical Services (DMS), to provide feedback from members about the PDF, and to appeal for deferment of the implementation date so as to allow more time for a practical form to be made available to clinics. The general impression from members was that the form was too long to be practical, especially in the context of a GP setting.

SMA highlighted to MOH the following suggestions from members:

- to consider re-designing a more practical version, preferably in a single page format; and

- to print the legal provisions separately on a poster which is to be displayed in the clinic and to be shown/read by the registration staff.

The College of Family Physicians Singapore (CFPS) also wrote to MOH to support SMA's letter, and to provide more feedback.

In MOH's reply of **26 June 2003**, the Acting DMS informed that the Ministry would not defer the implementation of the Directive. However, it would take into consideration the feedback during the review of the directive and the PDF.

MOH also clarified that Annex B of the Directive did not need to be attached to the PDF. Patients could be shown/read the legal basis under which they were required to provide the information.

As it appeared on 26 June that the Directive could not be deferred, SMA decided to source for bulk printing of the PDF, as a service to members.

We learnt from the evening news on **27 June 2003** that MOH had suspended the implementation of the PDF. The press release of 27 June on the MOH website reads:

"Since MOH announced its plan to introduce the Patient Declaration Form more than 2 weeks ago, the global SARS situation has improved markedly. Countries like China and Hong Kong have since been removed from the World Health Organisation's list of countries with local transmission of SARS. It also seems likely that the 2 remaining areas, Taiwan and Toronto will also be removed from the list of countries with local SARS transmission soon.

Based on the current assessment of the global and local SARS situation, the Ministry will suspend the implementation of the Patient Declaration Form, with immediate effect. However, the Ministry has stressed to medical practitioners and hospitals, that it is important for them to continue to obtain the travel history of their patients, particularly those with fever."

SMA would like to urge doctors to continue to be vigilant and to continue to obtain travel histories of patients, particularly those with fever.

We welcome members' valuable feedback, and hope to hear from members more often. ■

NEW EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBER

The SMA News is pleased to welcome its latest member on board. **Dr Tan Poh Kiang (MBBS, 1990)**, who has been a regular contributor to the SMA News, is a general practitioner in a HDB neighbourhood. He is daily challenged and reminded that the practice of medicine involves a scientific mind and a compassionate heart.

