

## Press Release

Organizers:



Hong Kong

Lung Foundation



Hong Kong

Thoracic Society



American College of Chest Physicians

(HK & Macau Chapter)

Supporting Organization:



Hong Kong

Respiratory Nursing College



## “Fighting Pneumonia 2013” Kick-off Ceremony

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### Reflections on SARS by Respiratory Medical Professionals

(Hong Kong, 24 February, 2013)

Pneumonia is the third leading cause of death in Hong Kong. The outbreak of SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) in 2003, wreaked havoc with its highly contagious and lethal nature. The epidemic presented an unprecedented challenge to healthcare workers in Hong Kong. Reflecting on their experiences, a “Fighting Pneumonia 2013” Campaign is launched to mark the 10 years from SARS to remind the public about the lurking danger of pneumonia in our city and its prevention.

**Dr Mok Yun Wing Thomas, Chairman of Hong Kong Lung Foundation & Specialist in Respiratory Medicine**, reminisced about the devastating impact of SARS on Hong Kong with a death toll of nearly 300 which included 8 healthcare professionals. Nonetheless, the epidemic globally spurred the world to revisit its strategy in preparedness of major infectious outbreaks and locally our city to be more vigilant.

Hong Kong Lung Foundation, will join forces with Hong Kong Thoracic Society, American College of Chest Physicians (Hong Kong & Macau Chapter) and Hong Kong Respiratory Nursing College to organize a series of educational activities to mark 2013 - 10 years from SARS - to deliver their common goal to champion lung health in our city with a focus on pneumonia.

### **Almost 1/4 of hospitalizations are related to pneumonia**

The threat of SARS may have dwindled but other types of pneumonia still pose a constant health hazard. **Dr Chan Wai Man Johnny, President of American College of Chest Physicians (Hong Kong & Macau Chapter) & Specialist in Respiratory Medicine**, pointed out that globally, pneumonia is the second leading cause of burden of disease. In Hong Kong, it is the third leading cause of death, following cancer and heart disease, resulting in over 6,100 deaths in 2011. Almost one-fourth of hospital admissions are related to pneumonia.

The common symptoms of pneumonia include cough, fever and chills. As the disease progresses, patients may get breathless. In severe cases, it can result in death due to respiratory failure. Pneumonia can be caused by different types of bacteria, viruses and fungi. The SARS in 2003 and the recently discovered Severe Respiratory Disease associated with Novel Coronavirus (SRDNC) are examples of pneumonia which can be transmitted among people and can kill.

Those with impaired immunity, for example children, elderly and patients with chronic diseases, are more vulnerable to pneumonia. Although pneumonia is mostly highly treatable with antibiotics, adopting effective prevention measure should be in the forefront to combat infection. These include hand hygiene with adequate hand washing and wearing of masks to stem droplet transmissions with contact, cough and sneeze in flu and pneumonia.

### **“Fighting Pneumonia 2013” - Campaign to raise public’s awareness of pneumonia**

In order to raise public awareness about pneumonia, the local respiratory medical professionals: **Hong Kong Lung Foundation, Hong Kong Thoracic Society, American College of Chest Physicians (HK & Macau Chapter) and Hong Kong Respiratory Nursing College** have organized a public education campaign - “Fighting Pneumonia 2013” to include:

- Public Education Series: Providing latest information on pneumonia through various media channels
- Walkathon: An event to gather ‘pneumonia survivors’ and their caregivers as whistle-blowers, medical specialists and nurses
- Publication on reflections on SARS: Insider stories from respiratory professionals, reflections and way forward

**Dr Ho Chung Man James, President of the Hong Kong Thoracic Society & Specialist in Respiratory Medicine**, reiterated the importance of public education on

pneumonia: its prevention, early recognition and role of respiratory specialists to deliver state-of-art care.

**Dr Yeung Koon Sing, Specialist in Respiratory Medicine** and **Ms Natalie Chan, Respiratory Nurse** had both suffered severe SARS, a nightmarish ordeal which they escaped narrowly. Yet, their moments of darkness and breathlessness did not deter them from contributing as respiratory medical professionals in the battlefield after they recovered. Their steadfast commitment exemplifies the mission of respiratory medical professionals in Hong Kong.

### **Conclusion**

Pneumonia will always pose a major health threat to the people of Hong Kong. On top, the recent discovery of a novel coronavirus that may be transmissible among human, calls for vigilance. The campaign, "Fighting Pneumonia 2013", will be timely enough to our city.

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## Case Sharing

### 1. Dr Yeung Koon Sing

- Dr Yeung's father was a patient with chronic kidney disease
- His father's illness inspired him to become a doctor
- Dr. Yeung was a 5th year medical student at the Chinese University of Hong Kong when SARS struck
- He was infected while he was an intern working on the 8A ward at Prince of Wales Hospital
- He was hospitalized in early March 2003
- He experienced severe breathing difficulty and shortness of breath. He was limited to his bed; bathing took him an hour.
- Yeung's father perished suddenly because of heart disease. Yeung was not able to accompany his father in his death bed as Yeung was under quarantine at the time. Only through tremendous efforts of staff, he managed to bid farewell to his father through a windowed-room.
- The death of his father plunged him into a dark hole. Luckily, support from his friends and family lifted him. Yeung recovered and was discharged at the end of March.
- Upon graduation in 2004, Yeung decided to be specialized in respiratory medicine as a wounded healer. His family members, however, didn't support his decision.
- However, Yeung managed to convince them with his strong commitment to serve to repay the society, no matter another deadly epidemic.
- His experience of breathless to gasp for life makes him a more compassionate doctor when he serves. His life-story to remind colleagues on vigilance is weighty.

## 2. Nurse Natalie Chan

- Chan has always aspired to be a nurse since very young.
- At the time of SARS outbreak, she worked in ward 8A at Prince of Wales Hospital.
- At first she had a cough, but then developed fever and shortness of breath as the disease progressed. On 10 Mar, she was hospitalized.
- The shortness of breath gave her sleepless nights and sufferings.
- However, she recalled those encouraging moments when colleagues shared food and daily necessities.
- As the ward was understaffed, when her health started to improve, her nightingale instinct propelled her to offer help to other sick patients and cheered them on with her own story on road to recovery.
- Yet, the news of colleagues and friends who had taken care of her or visited her and fell victims was lamentable to spin her into an emotional turmoil.
- After recovery, she now braves herself as respiratory nurse in a public hospital.
- Chan's experience in SARS is a blessing in disguise to help transform her to be more sensitive to patients' needs to walk an extra mile.
- Walking through the valley of darkness together, the battle of SARS etched on her shared memory with colleagues to be life-long friends and confidantes.
- Her commitment to stay in the battle front will remain unshakable albeit SARS returns.

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