



Emerging and Reemerging Infectious Diseases, Region of the Americas

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Suspected SARS case in Guangdong, China

On Friday, 26 December, the Ministry of Health of China informed the World Health Organization about a suspected case of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in a hospital in Guangzhou, Guangdong province.

The patient, a 32-year-old television producer from Guangzhou, is in isolation in a hospital. His condition is stable, and his temperature has been normal for three days. The patient developed fever and headache on 16 December. On 20 December, he sought medical assistance at Zhongshan University 1st Affiliated Hospital and was diagnosed as having pneumonia. Chest x-rays showed changes in the lower right lung. He was placed in isolation, and on 24 December was transferred to the Guangzhou 8th People's Hospital.

Laboratory tests have been performed by three laboratories: two in China's Center for Disease Control (CDC), and one in Guangdong's provincial CDC. The Ministry of Health has informed that the results indicate the possibility of SARS CoV infection. However, results at this stage are inconclusive, and further tests need performed. WHO has suggested that samples be sent overseas for international verification of the results.

Epidemiological investigations show that in the two weeks prior to the onset of symptoms the patient had no known contact with high-risk groups, such as health workers or animal handlers. The patient had remained in Guangzhou and had not eaten wild animal products. The source of the suspected SARS infection is therefore unclear at this stage.

Preventive measures included identification and testing of close contacts of the patient. All these individuals are well at present, although some are still under observation. Mandatory health declarations and temperature screening checks for passengers arriving from Guangdong have been established in airports. The Ministry of Health (MOH) has alerted doctors and laboratory personnel about the incident.

The Ministry of Health and WHO are collaborating in the following areas:

- Technical laboratory support to review test results.
- Technical support in the areas of epidemiological investigation and infection control.
- WHO will facilitate the shipment of additional diagnostic materials.

Although the final diagnosis of this case is still awaited, WHO has been strongly assured that all appropriate steps have been taken by health authorities to ensure that any risk to the public health has been minimized.

Sources:

- [SARS News, SARS Website](#). Ministry of Health, Hong Kong.
- [Update on suspected SARS case in Southern China, 29 december](#). WHO- Western Pacific Region.
- [Suspected SARS case in Southern China.WHO statement, 27 december](#). WHO- Western Pacific Region.