



Emerging and Reemerging Infectious Diseases, Region of the Americas

Vol. 1, No. 24—18 December 2003

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in Taiwan

Public-health authorities in Taipei have reported to WHO a single case of infection with SARS-CoV in a senior research scientist. The infection appears to have been acquired in the laboratory. The researcher had travelled to Singapore earlier and became ill the day he returned to Taiwan.

A full investigation is currently underway into the circumstances surrounding the acquisition of infection and of the laboratory procedures. The results have been confirmed in multiple samples in two other laboratories in Taipei. As recommended by WHO ([Summary of the Discussion and Recommendations of the SARS Laboratory Workshop, 22 October 2003](#)), before such results can be considered as fully confirmed, they should be verified by an external laboratory in the WHO International Network of SARS Reference Laboratories.

All contacts are being traced and will be followed up on by the health authorities. For additional information, see the [press release](#) issued by the Ministry of Health of Taiwan.

The WHO guidelines used to safely handle SARS-CoV specimens during the outbreak period are described in the [WHO Biosafety Guidelines for Handling of SARS Specimens](#). The guidelines take into account the absence of chains of human transmission and highlight the importance of strict adherence to biosafety procedures and practices in laboratory work with SARS-CoV.

Source: [WHO SARS page](#). Geneva: World Health Organization (WHO).