



# 香港家庭醫學學院 The Hong Kong College of Family Physicians

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## **Hong Kong College of Family Physicians announces the findings of a survey on how the COVID-19 outbreak affects her members.**

### **87% of the respondents' clinical practice was affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. HKCFP appeals to the Government to strengthen public-private partnership to combat the epidemic.**

Family doctors in the community are experiencing new challenges from the outbreak of the new COVID-19 infection. The Hong Kong College of Family Physicians conducted an online survey 31/1/2020 among its doctor members to identify the preparedness of family doctors in providing clinical care during this critical period.

Of the 491 (30.9% response rate) family doctors who completed the online survey, 246 (50.1%) doctors worked at public primary clinics, 242 (49.3%) doctors worked in the private sector while 3 (0.6%) worked in both sectors. The vast majority of the surveyed family doctors continued to provide regular primary care services to the public although many (428, 87.2%) reported that their clinical practice had been affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. Half of the doctors reduced non-acute consultation services and/or consultation time. Six (2.5%) private doctors needed to close their practices. As of 4 February 2020, over 140 patients with suspected COVID-19 infection had been encountered by 70 (14 %) family doctors who responded to the survey; 1 patient presented to a public family doctor surveyed was subsequently confirmed to be infected.

Main concerns of the surveyed family doctors included difficulties in securing personal protective equipment (PPE), lack of rapid diagnostic test, training demands on COVID-19, the need to enhance co-ordination of the roles and responsibilities between public and private family doctors and more effective public health policy to contain the outbreak. Many requested setting up designated clinics.

From this survey, it appears that most family doctors are taking heightened infection control measures in clinic setting. There is a large proportion of family doctors in private practice experiencing a shortage of protective gears including face masks and PPE although seeing patients suspected to be infected with the COVID-19 is not uncommon.

In summary,

1. Within 10 days since the first confirmed COVID-19 case in Hong Kong, over 140 patients with suspected COVID-19 presented to 70 family doctors participating in this survey, and one patient was confirmed to have the



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- infection. (i.e. family doctors are the very first point of professional contact of COVID-19 patients)
2. Most doctors responded to the outbreak with heightened infection control practices (masks, wash hands, disinfect, measure staff and patient temperature, install air purifier), but lack of PPE supplies had been a big problem and there remained concerns on whether these measures were adequate to protect the doctor, staff and other patients.
  3. Most respondents, particularly those working in private settings, voiced out the need for more support / guidance on infection control measures/equipment, clinical management / referral channel via designated clinics, availability of diagnostic test and timely updates on outbreak situation.
  4. It would be crucial to have better coordination between public and private sectors to include private family doctors in the combat against COVID-19 infection as part of the overall health system strategy and emergency response since 70% of primary care consultations take place in the private sector in Hong Kong.

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