

## HONGKONG PROTESTORS FACE MEDICAL HORRORS

### But The Department of Health Turns A Blind Eye

The temporary living conditions in which most of the protestors of the Hongkong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC) have chosen are such that the probability exists for an outbreak of highly infectious skin diseases.

In addition, gastroenteritis could spread among the protestors in the manner of a wildfire due to the less than acceptable sanitary conditions that are prevalent on the dirty streets of the territory, streets on which the protestors have selected to camp in order to make their stand, claiming that they are forced into perpetrating acts of civil disobedience to bring the present, Hongkong Government to heel.

Areas, such as Admiralty, close to the Central Business District of Hongkong Island, and important junctures of Mongkok, Kowloon, are infested by the young protestors who seem to be oblivious of the fact that their acts could result in being highly detrimental to their health.

In a telephone interview with Dr Wilson Hui, he explained that impetigo contagiosa could well be one of the problems with which many of the protestors might face unless sanitary conditions could be vastly improved.

(Impetigo contagiosa is a localised swelling and inflammation of the skin, resulting from an infection. In layman's terms, it would be described as a plethora of large, unsightly boils on the skin of an inflicted person.)

Dr Wilson Hui suggested that the Hongkong Government's Department of Health might like to take action ... before it is too late.

He cautioned, however:

*'I am not a dermatologist, but a general practitioner. You should seek out an expert in the field of dermatology for advice on impetigo. But, clearly, it is for the parents of the protestors to take the responsibility of looking after their children.'*

### What is Impetigo?

Impetigo contagiosa is one of the most-common forms of impetigo. It is, also, known as nonbullous impetigo.

According to a medical journal with which **TARGET** () consulted, impetigo contagiosa starts life as simple, seemingly innocuous red sores, more often than not around the noses and mouths of infected persons.

Within a few days of contracting the infection, the red sores starts to leak pus and, following this stage in the life of the disease, as the sores dry, they form yellow scabs.

As the infection subsides, it leaves behind multiple scars that mark its victims for life.

Strangely, even in the worst cases of impetigo, the sores are rarely painful, but they are a constant irritant,

leading to a sufferer, being forced to engage in scratch reflex – scratching an itch.

For the victims of impetigo, if the sores are scratched, the infection spreads very quickly to other parts of the body.

And, at that point, the original impetigo infection could lead to other, interrelated medical complications due to the sufferer's immune system's inability to fight the infection.

Anybody in the near vicinity of a person, who has contracted impetigo in one or more of its many forms – Bullous impetigo and Ecthyma, being but two of the most-common forms – are quite likely to be infected without them even realising it.

Transmission of impetigo is by direct contact with lesions or with nasal carriers.

The causes of this disease are contact with the bacterium, *Staphylococcus Aureus*, and, sometimes, by *Streptococcus Pyogenes*.

The incubation period is between one day and three days after a person is exposed to *Streptococcus*; and, between four days and 10 days after exposure to *Staphylococcus*.

Impetigo is a highly contagious, bacterial skin infection, as most dermatologists would agree, and it is most prevalent in athletes, indulging in contact sports, such as wrestling, **Mixed Martial Arts (MMA)**, etc.

According to statistics of the **World Health Organisation (WHO)**, in the year 2010, 140 million people contracted impetigo. That is about two percent of the entire human population of the world.

### **What is Gastroenteritis?**

Gastroenteritis is an inflammation of the gastrointestinal tract.

It involves both the stomach of a person as well as the small intestine.

The two main causes of gastroenteritis are norovirus and food poisoning – salmonella or campylobacter bacteria.

A sufferer of gastroenteritis experiences, almost immediately on the bacterium, becoming embedded in the gastrointestinal tract, abdominal pain and cramping.

Dehydration often follows as a direct result of the onslaught of gastroenteritis.

With gastroenteritis, it tends to interfere with a person's ability to absorb fluids and salts.

Symptoms include:

- Vomiting
- General malaise
- Loss of appetite
- Stomach cramps
- Aching limbs
- Headaches
- Fever

While gastroenteritis is, usually, short-lived, in extreme cases, it can, also, result in a sufferer's immune system, being compromised, leading to further medical complications.

### **Don't Quote Me!**

While some people might feel empathetic with many of the protestors' demands, for quite a number of medical practitioners of the HKSAR, they fear that if the protestors continue to camp out on dirty roads and neglect their health, the spread of diseases – especially impetigo and gastroenteritis – is a foregone conclusion.

It is well known that most of the protestors do not have unlimited funds to spend on food so that they eat whatever they can afford or whatever is supplied to them by their supporters.

On many side streets of Hongkong, where small restaurants abound, hygiene is but a word, not a guarantee in respect of the food that is served.

It is in such eateries that salmonella and campylobacter bacteria are to be found in abundance.

In multiple attempts to interview Hongkong Government doctors over the telephone, this medium was repulsed with remarks, such as:

*'I don't want to get into any trouble. I am a Civil Servant, you know.'*

After promising anonymity to one Government doctor, **TARGET** was told that, as far as she was concerned, the situation with the protestors is a *'very worrying one. Something should be done. But I'm not in a position to do, or say, anything. I have superiors ... that claim to do the thinking'*.

This doctor said that she had a young daughter and she is very worried about her.

When asked about impetigo, she said that that was just one of probable results of the present situation.

She ended her conversation with **TARGET** with a closing statement:

*'You have hit on just one probable disease, one that is rarely life-threatening. But there are all manner of deadly diseases, such as cholera, that have the ability to take lives, very quickly. Look at Haiti!'*

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