

Successful search for 64 possible carriers

By WEN JIAO
China Daily staff

Thanks to the local people's high alertness towards severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and the quick response of the local government and doctors, there are only two confirmed SARS cases in Xiamen of East China's Fujian Province so far, Zhang Zhenqing told China Daily in a phone interview.

Zhang is vice-director of Xiamen Zhongshan Hospital and is now in charge of the SARS treatment there.

Zhang said both of the SARS patients are in a good and stable condition and one, surnamed Ke, is going to be discharged from hospital this week.

The other one, surnamed Wang, will stay a

few days longer because her heart rate is a little faster than normal, added Zhang.

Ke and her colleague Wang were both diagnosed with SARS on April 1, after they found themselves with fevers and coughs.

As employees of an aircraft engineering company in Xiamen, they came back to Xiamen from Hong Kong on March 31. They were sent by the company to Hong Kong for a training programme and lived at Amoy Gardens, a residential estate where more than 300 residents have been infected with SARS.

The other 64 trainees, from different companies and different provinces but in the same programme, all stayed at Amoy Gardens. Among them, 42 people took the same bus to return to Xiamen with Wang and Ke.

For Zhang and his colleagues, the discovery and treatment of the two SARS patients

meant the battle against SARS in Xiamen just started — a battle to find all the other 64 people with a high risk of being SARS virus carriers.

To avoid the possible spread of SARS, a massive search for Wang and Ke's fellow trainees, around the city, the province and all other provinces where the trainees came from, began immediately.

A large team of health workers was organized to locate these potential SARS carriers, who, unaware of the danger, went about their business normally.

The survey and tracing work was much harder than the medical treatment.

There were no addresses and phone numbers available for the anti-epidemic searching groups. By contacting their companies, the searchers quickly found this information.

But some of them were incorrect and the task was made even harder by the fact that some people were travelling or staying at the homes of friends or relatives.

It took dozens of phone calls and a whole night of searching from door to door until Chen Ruijin, director of the quarantine station in Kaiyuan District in Xiamen, finally located a trainee.

The trainee had moved to a new address and changed to a new telephone number just a few days earlier.

As a result of the hard work of the team members, 20 trainees were located. Although none of them displayed SARS symptoms, they were sent to a local sanitarium, which had been converted into a SARS treatment station on April 2.

By April 7, a total of 36 trainees and three

relatives had been found and sent to the sanitarium for monitoring and observation.

The other 28 trainees from other provinces have also been located and put under medical observation by local hospitals.

After two weeks of observation and tests, none of the 64 trainees, fortunately, was affected. And the 39 in the sanitarium have already returned to their work.

"It's a successful battle," Zhang Zhenqing said. "It helped avoid the possible spread of SARS in Xiamen."

"People in Xiamen are getting more and more aware of the disease, knowing how to protect themselves and how to protect the people around them."

"It's crucial to curb the spread of the SARS and get an ultimate victory in this battle," Zhang said.

Life goes on despite SARS

Chinese remain calm in the face of epidemic

Editor's note: The severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) epidemic has affected the lives of many Chinese people. Here we take a look at how some are coming to terms with it.

By YU NAN and OU SHUYI
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the Beijing-based People's Medical Publishing House, has remained calm in the face of the spreading SARS epidemic

in the city. She does not wear a mask when she rides on the bus, even though more of her colleagues do so and have urged her to follow suit.

"Doctor Zhong Nanshan from Guangdong says on TV that there will not be any dangers if the air circulation is good, even on a bus," Wang said. "I deeply believe it with my own scientific knowledge. On the bus, the windows are open wide, and I often sit just beside the window, so I am safe."

"Besides, if all other people wear masks, there is no need for me to wear one, I am the safest person there," she said jokingly.

However, seriously, she added that washing hands often, having good rests and food to improve immunity, and having regular and proper exercises are very important and necessary to keep herself and all the people stronger in the face of SARS.

She has been on a diet, eating only fruit and vegetables at supper. In the past few days, Wang has bought some fish and chicken from a nearby food market to make some nutritious soup for the whole family.

"I think it's time to forget about weight problems," she said. "Having a healthy body must be the top priority."

A book named "Self-Protection Against SARS," which was written by medical experts and published by the publishing house where she works, is the latest bestseller in the capital, she said.

"It's a lie if I say I'm not scared about the disease, but I would rather face it with a scientific attitude than to keep myself in endless mental panic."

A little lonely

Compared with Wang, Liu Xin, 25, a senior graduate student at the School of International Studies of Peking University seemed more cautious.

She left campus and went back home to southern Beijing last week after the university cancelled all the classes. School may resume on May 6.

"I will just stay at home for a while," she said. "I miss my friends and classmates but to make everybody feel better and comfortable, it's better to stay at home now."

"My parents seem more composed — they still meet friends and go shopping at the supermarket — maybe because they have experienced more SARS cases. They have distributed a handbook and a brochure with detailed instructions of how to prevent SARS infection, she said.

"Following the instructions, my mother disinfects our home every two days and I wash my hands three times as soon as I come home," she said.

She felt happy that many of her friends called her and sent messages through her mobile phone to ask whether she is OK.

"Most of us were very scared at first, but now, as we know more and more about it, we feel a little bit relieved."

"It's a pity that I can not go to the gym now but I am doing sit-ups every day at home instead," she said.

While Liu Xin and her parents make an effort to maintain life as normal, Lin Nan is regretting not being able to directly help patients infected with SARS.

Young doctor's work in Beijing

As a doctor at Chaoyang Hospital in eastern Beijing, Lin Nan sees fewer patients nowadays.

Lin, who graduated from the Capital University of Medical Science last summer, has been treating patients with ear, nose and throat illnesses at the otolaryngological department.

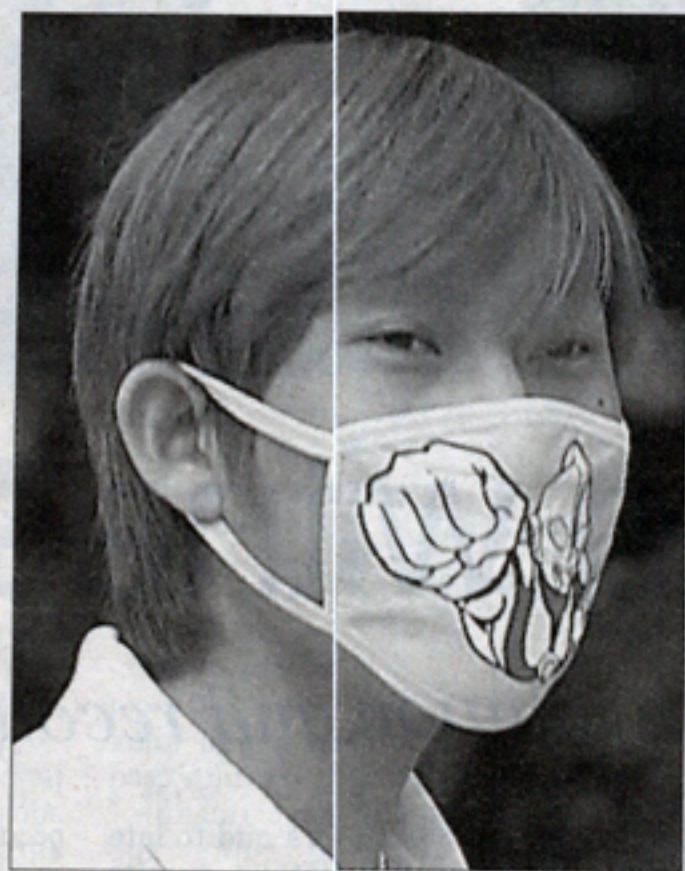
He feels it is a pity that he cannot work at the frontline of the battle against SARS.

"I really want to join the group," he said. "I am so curious about the new disease and it would be a very precious experience for me."

"I lost the chance because the hospital required doctors with longer time of experience," Lin explained.

He said that fewer people come to the hospital now. The doctors in the hospital are informed about the latest information of SARS every day. They have introduced many new measures to guard against cross-infection and protect themselves as well. They wear multi-layer masks, protective glasses, and more regular sterilization within the whole hospital.

"Be careful but don't be so scared," he said. "The best way to protect yourself is to have a



A healthy mind is a healthy body: Local Beijing residents have drawn paintings or simply written big characters to show their strong determination in the on-going battle against SARS. Experts suggest that a healthy state of the mind is important in maintaining bodily defences against the virus.

regular, healthy lifestyle, which is vital to improve your immune system."

Mother's own measures

Whereas people in Beijing and other parts of the country still need time to adjust to the previously little-known disease, people in South China's Guangdong Province are gradually adapting themselves to resuming normal life.

"I never bought any Banlangen for my family, but I paid much attention to our daily diet," said Lin Yong, 54, a retired worker who helps take care of her four-year-old grandson at home.

Since the spring in Guangdong, Cantonese humid and hot in take too many hot foods, such as mutton, shrimp and chicken, which Lin said would cause symptoms of "shinghuo," meaning heat rising inside.

In addition to vegetables and fruits, soup has been an indelible part of the daily diet of Lin's family.

"I like to use ingredients like tremella and they would make the soup tasty and are very good for your health," Lin explained.

Tremella is better known as *yu'er* or silver ear, with its large white, somewhat crystal after being stewed. It is also known for its function in cleansing the lung, among other possible nutritive effects, according to traditional Chinese beliefs.

Also according to traditional beliefs, a person's health hinges on the balance between the *yin* and the *yang* in his/her body. Too much *yin* (represented by coldness) or *yang* (represented by heat) could weaken the body's defence against invasion of viruses or bacteria from the outside.

Spring is when people usually have more heat in their bodies than in coldness.

So "these special ingredients, such as tremella and lotus seed help us get rid of the heat in our body and help the *yin* and *yang* in balance," Lin explained.

From a doctor in Guangzhou

Since the first case of SARS surfaced in late November, Guangdong has been one of the hardest-hit areas in the country of most news stories regarding the epidemic over the past few months.

"There is no need to panic over SARS," said Chen Hua, a 30-year-old physician working



Vigilant villagers: Xiao Yiting (right), a farmer in Baigezhuang Village, Shunyi District of Beijing, volunteers to stand guard at the village entrance. Whoever returns home from outside the village must have their temperatures taken. The village volunteers have also organized to help clean and disinfect the houses.

with the People's Hospital in Guangzhou, capital of the province.

The hospital has admitted over 160 SARS patients since early February and none of its medical staff has been infected.

Though Chen has worked at the emergency room and dealt with some SARS cases, her life, as she described, has continued as usual as before.

What troubled her most, rather than getting infection of SARS, was the lack of sleep when working at the night shift.

"We should in no way scare ourselves. To some extent, SARS is no more dangerous than other epidemic diseases that we doctors have confronted before," Chen said.

"Of course, it's better for you, for society to be nervous rather than indifferent," Chen added. "When you get nervous you pay attention to prevention!"

Many people did get nervous back in February when rumours about SARS began to spread around the province, recalled Ding Huiyan, a journalist working with a Guangzhou-based newspaper.

Local people resorted to folk remedies to fight against the disease. They used white vinegar and a Chinese herbal remedy known as *Banlangen*, which is made from the root of the indigo tree. Many Chinese people resort

to *Banlangen* to combat common colds, despite that no medical authorities have proved that these remedies could effectively prevent the disease.

When Ding went to the drug store for a small investigation, she found gauze masks and *Banlangen* had been disappearing from the shelves.

Influenced by the tension, Ding decided to follow suit. Like most of her colleagues, she began to drink a kind of "*liangcha*" (an herbal tea popular in the province, especially in the summer), the recipe of which is targeted mainly at flushing toxins from the body and reducing humidity and heat.

Though she hardly believed that the herbal tea could really prevent her from catching SARS, she drank it for a couple of days.

"Fortunately, the nervousness did not last long and life is back to normal again," Ding recalled.

Nowadays, she dines out with friends. Though she bought a number of gauze masks a few months ago, she seldom wears it even when she goes shopping or takes the bus.

"It seems a little bit awkward for you to wear a mask, especially when there are not many people wearing masks around the city," explained Ding. "To keep a good state of mind, I think, might be more useful than having any medicine to prevent the disease."

Trade fair continues with local enthusiasm

By LIU WEIFENG
China Daily staff

GUANGZHOU: Lin Ling, well-dressed and made up, stood upright at the Visitors Registration Office to the Guangzhou Trade Fair building in the morning of April 14, the day before the trade fair started.

With a sweet smile, she was holding a paper board with the word "Interpreter" in an eye-catching colour and size.

Lin, from the local foreign language university, was not alone. Many students from colleges and universities in Guangzhou queued up in a line of more than 50 metres, all trying to get a part-time jobs as interpreters for the

visiting international business people.

Although many of Lin's schoolmates decided not to come to look for a part-time job for fear of SARS infection, Lin and others still arrived.

By getting a part-time job at the fair, they hoped to improve their foreign language proficiency but also to earn some pocket money.

As the number of newly confirmed SARS patients is steadily dropping in Guangzhou, local people have retained their enthusiasm for the Guangzhou Trade Fair, which ends tomorrow.

"Guangzhou trade fair is really a fair for all Guangzhou people no matter what happens," said Liu Yuanyuan, an exhibitor from the China Abrasives Import and Export Corporation, who has been attending the fair for more

than 10 years.

Businesses, from hotels to fast food or convenience stores, were well prepared for this year's fair, and their enthusiasm was partly fuelled by the prospect of doubling or even tripling the prices they normally charge.

Also standing in the queue was Zhang Zhifeng, 23, who had come from Central China's Hunan-based Xiangtan University. Zhang, a university senior, said he hoped his efforts would land him a full-time job in Guangzhou.

Lin did get her part-time job with a daily salary of 400 yuan (US\$48.3), twice as much as an ordinary interpreter.

There are other temporary jobs on offer at the trade fair than interpreters, but the fair this year suffers from the SARS epidemic.

"I earned 500 yuan (US\$60.4) on my peak day last year," Li Jing'an, a temporary cargo porter, said. "But things are not so good this time."

Li, 35 and from East China's Shandong Province, is normally a porter at a wholesale clothing market, earning a monthly salary of 800-1,000 yuan (US\$96.6-120.8), he said.

One day's salary during the fair in the past is equal to two weeks normal wages, Li said.

With a "Sorry," Li rushed towards a truck, which was just parked outside the fair ground.

His business was coming. Although business is not as good as they were before during the trade fair, most of them say it still better than normal.



HUANG YIMING/China Daily

Need assistance? College students and other people in Guangzhou line up to solicit different jobs in front of the Guangzhou Trade Fair building.