

An Experience of Establishing A Sampling Site at Kaohsiung International Airport in Response to COVID-19 Pandemic, 2020

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Abstract

In response to the outbreak of COVID-19, Taiwan implemented strict border control measures and entry restrictions immediately. According to the policy of the Central Epidemic Command Center (CECC), the quarantine officers at the international ports of entry have to send the inbound passengers showing COVID-19 suspected symptoms along with the specific travel history to designated hospitals for further medical evaluation. As the continued spread of COVID-19, the number of passengers sent to the designated hospitals increased, but the ratio of hospitalized passengers was low. In order to reduce the burden of designated hospitals and enhance our COVID-19 sampling capacity, an on-site sampling station was established at Kaohsiung Airport on February 26, 2020. Inbound passengers with specific travel history and COVID-19 suspected symptoms, instead of being sent to the hospitals, could go home waiting for the test results after on-site sampling.

The medical team of Kaohsiung Airport Sampling Station was consisted of medical professionals from 6 medical centers in southern Taiwan and operated for 26 days during the hardest time of COVID-19 epidemic in Taiwan. In this period, 153 medical person-time were involved in on-site sampling task and 129 inbound travelers were sampled. Since the CECC announced that all inbound passengers should be subjected to a 14-day home quarantine after March 19, 2020, the number of international flights and

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passengers decreased abruptly, which led to a drop of on-site sampling demand. In consideration of cost-effectiveness, the Kaohsiung Airport Sampling Station temporally closed on March 22, 2020. Nevertheless, under the continuing threat of COVID-19 pandemic, Kaohsiung Airport Sampling Station is always prepared to re-operate for fighting the disease.

Keywords: Severe Pneumonia with Novel Pathogens, COVID-19, Sampling station