



Hong Kong College of Paediatricians
香港兒科醫學院
(Incorporated in Hong Kong with Limited Liability)



Response from Hong Kong College of Paediatricians on Initial Findings of the Child Fatality Review Panel [Submitted via the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine]

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To be more broad-minded, we opined that sudden collapse of a 5-month-old baby may be due to acute infection or side-effects of drugs received, or an underlying metabolic disease that is precipitated by the acute illness. We cannot comment without knowing the details of the case. We would make the following general comments:

- 1) Any unexpected death in infants needs thorough investigation including saving blood and urine samples for infection, toxicology and metabolic tests, in addition to a full autopsy. Protocol should be in operation in Emergency Departments which are usually the point of first contact of such cases.
- 2) It is beneficial to detect inborn errors of metabolism in infants in pre-symptomatic stage to start treatment and prevent acute deterioration. We hope that the expanded newborn screening programme can be implemented soon to prevent these avoidable deaths.
- 3) Our College agrees with the recommendations of the Review Panel that over-the-counter cough mixtures are generally not recommended for children under 6 years old. This is the recommendations from the FDA(USA) and MHRA(UK). We also opined that cough suppressants containing codeine is not generally recommended for children. We have announced these good practice recommendations to all paediatricians via our newsletters before. We also recommend this caution to be extended to all doctors (family physicians, general practitioners, emergency department doctors) who may encounter paediatric patients.
- 4) Another potential danger is the inappropriate use resulting in overdosage of over-the-counter cough medicines by parents/caretakers without a doctor's prescription. More deaths could be prevented by empowering parents on proper use of cough medicines and how to recognise deterioration in their children.