

The coroner's system in Hong Kong

To the Editor—Prof Bernard Knight's article titled "The future of the coroner's system in Hong Kong" (HKMJ 1996;2:217-8) contains a number of inaccuracies that need to be clarified.

The statements "the police ... appear to exercise too much authority in deciding when there is the need for an autopsy" and "the practice of putting the responsibility for 'waiving' an autopsy on hospital pathologists" are contradictory and both statements are not true. The decision about whether or not there is a need for an autopsy has always been the prerogative of the coroner and some doctors here feel that there is more than enough central direction from his office in day-to-day procedures.

The term "Coroner's Officer" in Hong Kong does not refer only to "lawyers in the Attorney General's

department who act as counsel in contentious cases." There are three full-time coroner's officers attached to the coroner's office. They are experienced inspectors seconded from the Police and are responsible for co-ordinating the compilation of death reports by Police Divisions and they work under the direct supervision of the coroner.

The coroner in Hong Kong is also employed full-time. While it is true that he does not "have a visible hands-on approach to the daily case-load," he does direct the investigation of non-criminal coroner's cases.

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THE CHALLENGE OF ASTHMA : LANCET CONFERENCE 1997

- Why is asthma prevalence increasing?
- How do environmental factors lead to the bronchial constriction, inflammation, and hyper-reactivity that characterise asthma?

**These are just some of the questions being asked about asthma.
The Lancet is planning a conference on the topic for late 1997.**

If you have original research in asthma epidemiology, pathogenesis management, or prevention to contribute, or if you simply wish to take part in the debate chaired by Prof Anne Tattersfield, then you are welcome to attend the conference, to be held on October 9 and 10, 1997, in Tours, in the Loire region of France.

For further details, please write to:

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