
Chapter 4

Medical Services, Public Health and Elderly Care

Preamble

Hong Kong has a quality healthcare system supported by a team of highly professional healthcare workers. Our public and private medical sectors provide a full range of diversified services, including a low-cost public healthcare “safety net” that ensures no one in Hong Kong is denied medical care due to a lack of means.

We will seek to ensure the sustainability of our healthcare system through a series of reform measures, including the promotion of long-term development of primary care and Chinese medicine, proposed introduction of the Voluntary Health Insurance Scheme, revamp of the regulatory regime for private healthcare facilities and implementation of the electronic health record programme.

In face of the challenges brought about by an ageing population and the changes in the prevalence of diseases, we will uphold our commitment to providing quality and affordable public healthcare services. We will increase the capacity of the healthcare system on the one hand and enhance service quality on the other, through service and infrastructure development.

The Government is committed to building and maintaining a healthy community. We devote a lot of efforts to ensure that the wide variety

of food available for consumption is safe, and the public at large are free from threats of animal diseases. We also work tirelessly to provide a clean and hygienic environment, and remain vigilant in taking actions to prevent and control diseases.

As Hong Kong turns rapidly into an ageing society, development of elderly care services has become even more important. Our objective is to enable our senior citizens to live in dignity and to provide the necessary support for them to promote their sense of belonging, security and worthiness. We will continue to implement a host of measures and initiatives to enhance elderly care on all fronts.

For the frail elderly, we strive to provide quality and cost-effective long-term care services in line with our policy of promoting “ageing in place as the core, institutional care as back-up”. In this respect, we will strengthen and expand community and home care services whilst at the same time increase and enhance subsidised residential care services. We will also carry on with our efforts to provide support services for carers of the elderly.

New Initiatives

We will:

Enhancing Healthcare Services Provision

- Increase the number of public hospital beds and operating theatre sessions to enhance the service capacity for addressing the ever rising healthcare needs. (FHB)
- Increase the quota for specialist outpatient and general outpatient consultation and provide additional emergency medicine wards to improve the waiting time for outpatient and emergency services. (FHB)
- Strengthen the geriatric day rehabilitation services and the outreach services of the Community Geriatric Assessment Team to provide discharged elderly and those living in residential care homes with rehabilitation programme and comprehensive assessment and care management, thereby promoting continuity of care at the community. (FHB)
- Conduct an interim review of the pilot General Out-patient Clinic Public-Private Partnership Programme in Kwun Tong, Wong Tai Sin and Tuen Mun districts, consider expanding the scope to cover other chronic diseases and increasing the number of patients, and plan for extending the programme to all 18 districts of the territory in phases. (FHB)

- Increase the number of psychiatric beds in Siu Lam Hospital, with a view to clearing up cases of severe intellectual disability on the waiting list in phases in the coming three years. (FHB)
- Strengthen the manpower of psychiatric teams of the Hospital Authority and introduce a peer support element to the Case Management Programme for patients with severe mental illness. (FHB)
- Construct a new acute general hospital in the Kai Tak Development Area. Phase 1 of the hospital will include the setting up of an oncology centre and the provision of inpatient and ambulatory services. (FHB)
- Explore the feasibility of conducting neonatal screening for inborn error of metabolic diseases on a pilot basis in the public healthcare sector. (FHB)

Chinese Medicine

- Plan and develop a testing centre on Chinese medicines managed by the Department of Health, which will be specialised in the testing of and scientific research on Chinese medicines, with a view to setting safety and quality standards and testing methods of Chinese medicines. (FHB)

Health Promotion

- Promote the importance of mental health and mental well-being through a territory-wide public education and publicity campaign to be launched by the Department of Health. (FHB)

Healthcare Service Development and Infrastructure

- Proceed with the preparatory work for the second stage of the electronic health record programme. (FHB)

Food Safety and Healthy Eating

- Conduct public consultation on the regulation of nutrition and health claims for formula products and prepackaged food for infants and young children under the age of 36 months. (FHB)
- Expand the Food Safety Laboratory in Pok Fu Lam to make it a permanent set-up for enhancing effective delivery of testing work to protect food safety. (FHB)
- Devise and implement a strategic plan for encouraging reduced intake of salt and sugar in food so as to promote a healthy diet. (FHB)
- Conduct public consultation on the regulation of the safety of edible oil and the recycling of waste cooking oil. (FHB)
- Conduct public consultation on the regulation of cooked meat. (FHB)

Live Poultry

- In view of the continuing threat of avian influenza, commission a consultancy to study the way forward of the live poultry trade and whether sale of live poultry should continue in Hong Kong, and consult the public on the recommendations of the consultant. (FHB)

Municipal Services

- Put forward concrete improvement proposals in 2015 for a number of public markets after considering the recommendations of the consultancy study and taking into account the conditions of the markets and the challenges and opportunities facing them. The proposals pursued will provide reference for future improvement to other public markets. (FHB)

On-going Initiatives

We are:

Enhancing Healthcare Services Provision

- Planning and implementing initiatives to promote the development of primary care, including establishment of community health centres, formulation of reference frameworks for specific chronic diseases and population groups, and development of the Primary Care Directory. (FHB)
- Enhancing public healthcare services through public-private partnership to increase service volume, reduce waiting time, offer additional choices to patients and enhance cost-effectiveness. We are implementing the following projects –
 - procuring additional places for haemodialysis services from the private sector to provide treatment for eligible patients with end-stage renal disease;
 - providing outsourced radiological investigation services for selected groups of cancer patients; and
 - subsidising patients to receive cataract surgeries in the private sector. (FHB)
- Widening the scope of the Hospital Authority Drug Formulary to enhance the efficacy of treating various diseases. (FHB)

- Reviewing the existing policy on mental health with a view to mapping out the future direction for development of mental health services in Hong Kong, and taking forward enhancement measures having regard to the recommendations of the Review Committee on Mental Health. (FHB)
- Planning and developing a pilot programme to subsidise colorectal cancer screening for persons in specific age groups. (FHB)

Healthcare Service Development and Infrastructure

- Constructing the Tin Shui Wai Hospital and the Hong Kong Children’s Hospital at Kai Tak, and actively pursuing the expansion and redevelopment of United Christian Hospital, Kwong Wah Hospital, Queen Mary Hospital and Kwai Chung Hospital. (FHB)
- Continuing with the minor works projects to improve facilities in public hospitals and clinics by utilising the one-off grant of \$13 billion allocated to the Hospital Authority in 2014. (FHB)
- Continuing the implementation of the first stage of the electronic health record programme to set up a territory-wide patient-oriented system which will facilitate the sharing of electronic health records between public and private healthcare providers. The system will be launched after the passage of the Electronic Health Record Sharing System Bill by the LegCo. (FHB)
- Facilitating the further development of private hospitals with a view to ensuring the healthy development of a twin-track healthcare system in Hong Kong. (FHB)

Regulation of Medical Devices

- Developing proposals for statutory regulation of medical devices, in the process of which a consultancy study on the regulatory framework will be conducted. We will take into account the findings of the study, other assessment results and views of stakeholders. (FHB)

Chinese Medicine

- Working in collaboration with the Chinese Medicine Development Committee to consider the implementation details of developing a Chinese medicine hospital on a reserved site. In order to gather experiences in the operation and regulation of Chinese medicine in-patient services, which will serve as the basis for formulating the mode of operation of the proposed Chinese medicine hospital, the Hospital Authority launched the first stage of the Integrated Chinese-Western Medicine Pilot Project in September 2014 in three of its hospitals to provide treatment with integrated Chinese and Western medicine for three disease areas, namely stroke rehabilitation, low back pain and palliative care for cancer. (FHB)
- Conducting a review on the development of the Chinese medicine sector through the Chinese Medicine Development Committee established in February 2013 to formulate a strategy to raise the professional standard and status of Chinese medicine practitioners, support research and development of Chinese medicine, promote treatment with integrated Chinese and Western medicine, expand the role of Chinese medicine in the public healthcare system, and examine the feasible mode of operation of a Chinese medicine hospital. (FHB)

- Continuing to subsidise and monitor the 18 public Chinese medicine clinics to enhance Chinese medicine service in our public healthcare system. (FHB)

Ensuring Long-term Sustainability of Healthcare System

- Continuing with the overall review of the operation of the Hospital Authority to ensure that it will continue to provide quality and effective services under the twin-track healthcare system. (FHB)
- Revamping the regulatory regime for private healthcare facilities to enhance the safety, quality and price transparency of private healthcare services. (FHB)
- Taking forward the Voluntary Health Insurance Scheme to provide more choices and better protection for users of private healthcare services. (FHB)

Disease Prevention and Control

- Implementing the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance and improving our infectious disease surveillance, control and notification system. (FHB)
- Implementing a multi-pronged strategy to minimise the risk of and enhance Hong Kong's preparedness for influenza pandemic. (FHB)
- Continuing to implement and improve the subsidy schemes for eligible children and elderly people to receive seasonal influenza and pneumococcal vaccinations to enhance primary care and disease prevention. (FHB)

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- Adopting a comprehensive preventive and surveillance programme to reduce the risk of avian influenza outbreaks and human infections in Hong Kong. We will keep the situation under review and update the relevant policies in a timely manner. (FHB)
 - Drafting legislation to control the import of poultry eggs to minimise the risk of avian influenza and other food safety hazards. (FHB)
 - Implementing the Strategic Framework for Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases to promote cross-sectoral co-operation in the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases. (FHB)

Health Promotion

- Making progressive efforts in tobacco control through the multi-pronged approach of publicity, promotion, education, legislation, enforcement, taxation and smoking cessation service. (FHB)
- Promoting registration on the Central Organ Donation Register to the public through collaboration with relevant organisations. (FHB)

Animal Welfare

- Following up the legislative amendments to tighten up the regulatory framework for pet trading to enhance animal welfare. (FHB)
- Implementing the “Trap-Neuter-Release” trial programme for stray dogs. (FHB)

Veterinary Service

- Following up the legislative amendments to the Veterinary Surgeons Registration Ordinance to strengthen and expand the membership of the Veterinary Surgeons Board of Hong Kong and streamline its procedures for handling complaints. (FHB)

Safe use of Pesticides and Veterinary Drugs

- Continuing our efforts to promote and ensure the safe and proper use of pesticides. (FHB)
- Refining the details of the proposed regulatory framework governing veterinary drug residues in food with reference to the Pesticide Residues in Food Regulation. (FHB)

Elderly Healthcare Services

- Continuing to promote the Elderly Health Care Voucher Scheme, which subsidises elderly people aged 70 or above to use private primary care services in the community, including Western and Chinese medicine, dental and other preventive care services. (FHB)
- Continuing to implement a two-year pilot project in collaboration with NGOs to provide health assessment for elderly people aged 70 or above to enhance preventive care. (FHB)
- Implementing the Outreach Dental Care Programme for the Elderly to provide dental care and treatment for elderly people in residential care homes and similar facilities. (FHB)

Ageing in Place

- Implementing the Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly to enable eligible elderly people to choose the services that suit their individual needs with the use of service vouchers. (LWB)
- Increasing the number of day care and home care places for the elderly to support ageing in place. (LWB)
- Implementing the Integrated Discharge Support Programme for Elderly Patients on a territory-wide basis to provide integrated support services for discharged elderly patients who have difficulties taking care of themselves, and also for their carers. (LWB)
- Implementing the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Carers of the Elderly Persons from Low Income Families through the CCF to enhance support for carers of elderly persons. (LWB)
- Continuing the implementation of the District-based Scheme on Carer Training to enhance carers' knowledge and skills of providing care for the elderly. (LWB)

Long-term Care Services for the Elderly

- Continuing the implementation of the Pilot Residential Care Services Scheme in Guangdong to provide elderly persons on the Central Waiting List for subsidised residential care places with an option to choose to live in the two elderly homes located in Shenzhen and Zhaoqing which are run by Hong Kong NGOs. (LWB)

- Continuing with the work of the Elderly Commission to study the feasibility of introducing vouchers for residential care service for the elderly. (LWB)
- Increasing the number of subsidised residential care places for the elderly through –
 - the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme;
 - better use of space in subvented homes;
 - building of new contract homes; and
 - identification of sites for new homes. (LWB)
- Exploring the option of converting or redeveloping Wong Chuk Hang Hospital, which mainly provides extended care, into a care home for the elderly with more residential places. (LWB)
- Supporting infirm elderly who use subsidised residential care places through the provision of infirmary care supplement. (LWB)
- Supporting demented elderly in day care centres/units and those in subsidised residential care places through the provision of dementia supplement. (LWB)
- Implementing the Navigation Scheme for Young Persons in Care Services to encourage more young people to join the care service profession in the welfare sector. (LWB)

Financial Support for the Elderly

- Ensuring smooth operation of the OALA under the Social Security Allowance Scheme. The allowance is to supplement the living expenses of Hong Kong elderly persons aged 65 or above who are in need of financial support. (LWB)
- Continuing the implementation of the Guangdong Scheme launched in October 2013 to provide Old Age Allowance for eligible Hong Kong elderly people residing in Guangdong. (LWB)

Planning and Integration of Elderly Services

- Continuing with the work of the Elderly Commission to formulate the Elderly Services Programme Plan. (LWB)
- Considering suitable sites and operating mode for setting up Integrated Elderly Services Centres on a pilot basis to provide one-stop, multi-disciplinary healthcare and social services for the elderly at community level. (FHB/LWB)

Municipal Services

- Continuing to take forward the five-year assistance scheme launched in 2013 for improving the fire safety and design of hawker stalls in 43 fixed-pitch hawker areas. (FHB)
- Seeking support for public columbarium development on shortlisted sites across the territory whilst promoting green burials in parallel. (FHB)
- Working with the LegCo for early completion of the examination of the Private Columbaria Bill. (FHB)

- Conducting a comprehensive review of the fee levels and charging policy for the municipal services and facilities managed by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department. (FHB)
- Amending the Chinese Permanent Cemeteries Ordinance and the Chinese Permanent Cemeteries Rules to relax the restrictions in relation to the use of a family niche by close relatives and provide for improvements in the management and use of Chinese Permanent Cemeteries to better serve the community's needs. (HAB)