
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.

To ensure the sustainability of our healthcare system, we will continue to increase investment in public healthcare facilities and make improvements to them through redevelopment of existing hospitals and construction of new ones. We are also committed to implementing a series of reform measures, including the promotion of long-term development of primary care and Chinese medicine, taking forward in phases the recommendations of the Strategic Review on Healthcare Manpower Planning and Professional Development, proposed introduction of the Voluntary Health Insurance Scheme, revamp of the regulatory regime for private healthcare facilities and implementation of electronic health record sharing.

In the 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 spare no effort in ensuring 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 relentlessly to provide a clean and hygienic environment, and remain vigilant in taking actions to prevent and control diseases.

Ageing population has brought about various challenges to our society, of which long-term planning and sustainable development of elderly care services is particularly 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 based on the principle of “ageing in place as the core, institutional care as back-up”. To this end, we will continue to strengthen and expand community and home care services, as well as 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

- Strengthen and make better use of the pharmacist manpower of the Hospital Authority (HA) to expand clinical pharmacy services (including oncology and paediatric clinical pharmacy services) and enhance drug reconciliation, consultation, checking and management services for patients in order to promote proper drug consumption and reduce drug wastage. (FHB)
- Increase the number of public hospital beds and operating theatre sessions and the quota for endoscopy examination and diagnostic radiological service so as to enhance the service capacity for addressing the ever rising healthcare needs. (FHB)
- Increase the quota for general out-patient and specialist out-patient consultation and enhance the Accident & Emergency Services to improve the waiting time for out-patient and emergency services. (FHB)

Chinese Medicine

- Prepare to finance the construction of a Chinese medicine hospital on a reserved site in Tseung Kwan O and invite the HA to assist in identifying by way of tender a suitable non-profit-making organisation to take forward and operate the hospital. (FHB)

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- Continue to implement and expand the Integrated Chinese-Western Medicine Pilot Project through the HA. (FHB)

Healthcare Service Development and Infrastructure

- Commence the development of the second stage of the Electronic Health Record Sharing System, which includes enhancement of patients' control/selection of data, development of a patient portal and addition of other sharable data (including radiological images). (FHB)
- Consider formulating a more robust policy and legislative framework to facilitate end-of-life care planning and the provision of palliative care outside hospital settings. (FHB)

Ensuring Long-term Sustainability of Healthcare System

- Introduce a bill on the regulation of private healthcare facilities into the Legislative Council in the first half of 2017, with a view to ensuring patient safety and protecting consumer rights. (FHB)
- Implement the Voluntary Health Insurance Scheme to improve the quality and transparency of individual hospital insurance products, and examine the details of providing tax deduction for purchase of regulated health insurance products to encourage the public to use private healthcare services. (FHB)

Combating the Threat of Infectious Diseases

- Reduce the pressure of seasonal influenza and its complications on the public healthcare system through a pilot project in 2016-17 to expand the scope of the Government Vaccination Programme and Vaccination Subsidy Scheme. The target groups of recipients of free or subsidised seasonal influenza vaccination, originally covering children from six months to under six years old, has been expanded to cover children from six months to under 12 years old. Pregnant women and recipients of disability allowance have also been included. The above measures will be regularised as from 2017-18. (FHB)

Strengthening Medical Services for Non-communicable Diseases

- Gradually enhance the HA's management and treatment of life-threatening diseases, including its stroke care and cardiac services, with a view to strengthening service quality and capacity. The 24-hour intravenous thrombolytic therapy for stroke patients will be made available in individual hospital clusters in phases. The HA will also enhance its percutaneous coronary intervention, echocardiography and cardiac care unit services. (FHB)

Safeguarding Public Health

- Continue to provide the relevant screening services in the two public hospitals concerned upon completion of the 18-month "Pilot Study on Newborn Screening for Inborn Errors of Metabolism (IEM)" implemented by the Department of Health (DH) and the HA since October 2015. The pilot study has proved effective in reducing and preventing severe problems arising from IEM. The DH and the HA plan to extend the screening service to all public hospitals with maternity wards in phases starting from the second half of 2017-18. (FHB)

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- Examine the relevant legislative options for the regulation of health products for advanced therapies. (FHB)

Healthcare Manpower Planning and Professional Development

- Announce the outcome of the first territory-wide Strategic Review of Healthcare Manpower Planning and Professional Development. (FHB)

Mental Health Policy

- Set up a standing advisory committee on mental health based on the recommendation of the Review Committee on Mental Health chaired by the Secretary for Food and Health. (FHB)
- Follow up the Student Mental Health Support Scheme launched in the 2016/17 school year on a pilot basis to assist schools in supporting students with mental health needs by enhancing communication and collaboration among healthcare, education and social welfare professionals. The Government will map out the way forward in the light of the experience of the pilot scheme and by making reference to the actual operation. (FHB)
- Strengthen psychiatric healthcare manpower to improve patients' waiting time, and improve the case manager to patient ratio of the HA's Case Management Programme for patients with severe mental illness. (FHB)

Tobacco Control

- Launch a pilot public-private partnership programme on smoking cessation. (FHB)

Ageing in Place

- Provide support for the elderly living alone and families of elderly couples through cross-sector collaboration, including the participation of doctors. (LWB)
- Invite the Community Care Fund (CCF) to implement a pilot scheme to provide transitional care and necessary support for elderly persons discharged from public hospitals after treatment to avoid their premature admission into elderly homes. (LWB)
- Invite the CCF to implement a pilot scheme to provide home care and support services for elderly persons with mild impairment to encourage ageing in place. (LWB)
- Strengthen the community care and support services by providing an additional 2 000 vouchers under the Second Phase of the Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly to support ageing in place for elderly persons with moderate or severe impairment. (LWB)

Long-term Care Services for the Elderly

- Extend the Pilot Residential Care Services Scheme in Guangdong for three years to provide elderly persons waiting for subsidised care-and-attention places with an option to live in the two elderly homes located respectively in Shenzhen and Zhaoqing which are run by Hong Kong non-governmental organisations (NGOs). (LWB)
- Implement a pilot scheme under the Lotteries Fund to provide specialised residential care service for elderly persons with special needs at designated residential care homes for the elderly. (LWB)

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- Implement the Pilot Scheme on Residential Care Service Voucher for the Elderly by adopting “money-following-the-user” approach with a view to offering elderly persons in need of residential care service with an additional choice and providing an incentive for residential care homes for the elderly to improve their services. (LWB)
 - Increase the funding for Infirmity Care Supplement and Dementia Supplement in order to provide enhanced support for frail and demented elderly persons. (LWB)

Strengthening Elderly Healthcare Services

- Increase the manpower of the Health Care Voucher Unit of the DH for the implementation of the enhanced measure of lowering the eligible age for the Elderly Health Care Voucher to 65. At the same time, the Government is reviewing the effectiveness of the scheme with a view to ensuring that the scheme will enhance the provision of primary care services for the elderly, including preventive care. (FHB)
- Extend the medical fee waiver for public healthcare services to cover Old Age Living Allowance recipients aged 75 or above with assets not exceeding \$144,000 (elderly singletons) or \$218,000 (elderly couples) and consider adjusting the HA’s fee levels having regard to the review findings of the HA. (FHB)
- Provide free or subsidised 13-valent pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV13) for the elderly group under the Government Vaccination Programme and Vaccination Subsidy Scheme respectively with a view to strengthening elders’ immunity against pneumococcal infection. (FHB)

- Increase the manpower of the Elderly Health Service of the DH to enhance the capacity of and the services provided by its Elderly Health Centres (EHCs) and Visiting Health Teams, which include strengthening the provision of health promotion activities, providing priority to the needy elders to use the services of the EHCs, and allocating more first-time health assessment quotas to new members. (FHB)
- Enhance support for elderly patients with fragility fractures by increasing the HA's operating theatre sessions for surgery and traumatology, and setting up geriatric fragility fracture co-ordination services in designated acute hospitals; and enhance physiotherapy service for elderly patients. (FHB)
- Enhance the services provided by the HA's Community Geriatric Assessment Teams for terminally ill patients living in residential care homes for the elderly. (FHB)
- Strengthen medical-social collaboration through the joint efforts of the HA and the Social Welfare Department with a view to providing a full range of transitional care services and the required assistance for those elderly persons discharged from public hospitals, enabling them to age at home after the transitional period. (FHB)

Improving the Operation of the Medical Council of Hong Kong

- Introduce the Medical Registration (Amendment) Bill into the Legislative Council in the first half of 2017, with a view to improving the complaint investigation and disciplinary inquiry mechanism of the Medical Council of Hong Kong (MCHK), allowing more lay participation in the MCHK, and extending the valid period of limited registration of non-locally trained doctors to be approved by the MCHK from not exceeding one year to not exceeding three years. (FHB)
- Increase the manpower and resources of the MCHK Secretariat and strengthen its legal support in order to shorten the administrative processing time in handling complaints and conducting disciplinary inquiries. (FHB)

Animal Welfare

- Implement a new regulatory regime to strengthening the regulation of animal trading and dog breeding activities for enhancing animal welfare. (FHB)

Municipal Services

- Identify suitable sites in Tung Chung New Town Extension Area and Hung Shui Kiu New Development Area to build new public markets. (FHB)
- Intensify the cleansing of the environment and strengthening the related enforcement and prosecution work. (FHB)

On-going Initiatives

We are:

Enhancing Healthcare Services Provision

- Strengthening the services for chronic diseases through, for example, increasing the service capacity of chemotherapy and radiotherapy for cancer service, enhancing the service quota of haemodialysis for renal service, and stepping up complications screening for diabetic patients. (FHB)
- Continuing to implement the recommendations of the Steering Committee on Review of Hospital Authority through measures like refining the delineation of cluster boundary, shortening waiting time and adopting a refined population-based resource allocation model to enable the HA to better meet the challenges of an ageing population, increasing prevalence of chronic diseases and rising healthcare cost due to advance in medical technology. (FHB)
- Planning and implementing initiatives to promote the development of primary care, formulating reference frameworks for specific population groups and chronic diseases, promoting the Primary Care Directory, and co-ordinating and planning the works projects for the establishment of community health centres in various districts. (FHB)

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- 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;
 - subsidising patients to receive cataract operation in the private sector; and
 - enhancing the choices of infirmary care services for applicants on the Central Infirmary Waiting List managed by the HA through collaboration between the HA and NGOs. An Infirmary Service Public-Private Partnership Programme has been implemented on a pilot basis with an NGO which will operate infirmary services at the Wong Chuk Hang Hospital. (FHB)
 - Widening the scope of the HA Drug Formulary to improve the drug treatment for patients in public hospitals. (FHB)
 - Providing subsidised colorectal cancer screening in phases for eligible Hong Kong residents aged 61 to 70 within three years through the “Colorectal Cancer Screening Pilot Programme” launched in September 2016. (FHB)

- Continuing to extend the coverage of the General Out-patient Clinic Public-Private Partnership Programme to more areas, with a view to covering all 18 districts of the territory in phases in the coming two years. (FHB)

Healthcare Service Development and Infrastructure

- Continuing with the implementation of the Ten-year Hospital Development Plan. In addition to the redevelopment of Kwong Wah Hospital, Queen Mary Hospital and Kwai Chung Hospital, the Operating Theatre Block of Tuen Mun Hospital (Foundation Work) and the expansion of United Christian Hospital and Haven of Hope Hospital, which have already commenced, the preparation work for the construction of a new acute hospital at Kai Tak Development Area and the redevelopment of Prince of Wales Hospital (Phase 2) (Stage 1), and the main works for the extension of the Operating Theatre Block of Tuen Mun Hospital are also being planned. (FHB)
- Continuing to utilise the one-off grant of \$13 billion allocated to the HA in 2014 in carrying out minor works projects to improve facilities in public hospitals and clinics. (FHB)
- Continuing with the operation of the first stage of the electronic health record sharing system which allows public and private healthcare providers to upload and access electronic health records of voluntary participants. (FHB)
- Continuing our efforts to facilitate further development of private hospitals with a view to ensuring the healthy development of a twin-track healthcare system in Hong Kong. (FHB)

Mental Health Policy

- Continue to take forward the implementation of Joyful@HK, a three-year territory-wide public education and promotion campaign to promote to the public the importance of mental well-being. (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 has been conducted. We will take into account the findings of the study, other assessment results and views of stakeholders. (FHB)

Chinese Medicine

- Implementing the Integrated Chinese-Western Medicine Pilot Project to gather experience in the operation of integrated Chinese-Western medicine and Chinese medicine in-patient services, which will serve as the basis for formulating the mode of operation of a Chinese medicine hospital. Launched in September 2014, the pilot project provides treatment with integrated Chinese-Western medicine for three disease areas, namely stroke treatment, low back pain care and palliative care for cancer, in seven hospitals of the HA. (FHB)
- Conducting a review of 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-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)
- Planning and developing the Government Chinese Medicines Testing Institute through the DH. The Institute will specialise in the testing of and scientific research on Chinese medicines, with a view to setting reference standards for the safety, quality and testing methods of Chinese medicines. Pending the establishment of a permanent Government Chinese Medicines Testing Institute, we will set up a temporary one, which will be operated in phases from the first quarter of 2017. (FHB)
- Continuing with the research work after completing the compilation of Hong Kong Chinese Materia Medica Standards for 236 Chinese materia medica commonly used in Hong Kong. Our target is to set reference standards for around 28 Chinese materia medica each year. A pilot study has also been launched on the standard setting for Chinese medicines decoction pieces under the Hong Kong Chinese Materia Medica Standards Project. (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 influenza pandemic and enhance Hong Kong's preparedness for the pandemic. (FHB)

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- Continuing to implement and improve the vaccination schemes/ vaccination subsidy scheme to provide free/subsidised seasonal influenza and pneumococcal vaccinations for eligible persons, with a view to enhancing primary care and disease prevention. (FHB)
 - 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)
 - Implementing the Strategic Framework for Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases to promote cross-sector co-operation in strengthening the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases. (FHB)
 - Providing guidance under a “one health” framework, formulating strategies and implementing action plans against antimicrobial resistance from various aspects through the High-level Steering Committee on Antimicrobial Resistance, which was set up in June 2016, comprising representatives from relevant government departments, public and private hospitals, healthcare organisations, academia and relevant professional bodies. (FHB)

Healthcare Manpower Planning and Professional Development

- Launching the Accredited Registers Pilot Scheme for healthcare professionals who are currently not subject to statutory registration, so as to facilitate members of the public in making informed decisions when using these services. (FHB)

Health Promotion

- Formulating legislative proposal for the regulation of electronic cigarettes. (FHB)

- Strengthening collaboration with relevant organisations to promote organ donation and encourage the public to register at the Centralised Organ Donation Register. (FHB)

Food Safety and Healthy Eating

- Studying the latest development on regulation of nutrition and health claims for formula products and prepackaged food for infants and young children under the age of 36 months, with a view to putting forth specific legislative proposals. (FHB)
- Studying the feasibility of re-provisioning and expanding the Food Safety Laboratory of the Government Laboratory to enhance its testing capability and operational efficiency for tests relating to food safety. (FHB)
- Putting forth legislative proposals in respect of the regulation of the safety and quality standard of edible fats and oils, and commissioning local universities to conduct studies on “cooking oils in use” with a view to assisting the Centre for Food Safety to develop guidelines on good practices on “cooking oils in use” for the trade. (FHB)
- Initiating consultation on strengthening the regulation of the levels of heavy metallic contamination in food. (FHB)
- Continuing to study the regulation of cooked meat including looking into international practices. (FHB)
- Continuing to devise and implement a strategic plan for encouraging the public to reduce intake of salt and sugar in food to promote a healthy diet. (FHB)

Veterinary Surgeons Board Election Arrangements

- Drawing up regulations for the election of members from the veterinary profession to the Veterinary Surgeons Board of Hong Kong in accordance with the new provisions in the Veterinary Surgeons Registration (Amendment) Ordinance 2015; and supporting the Board in organising and holding the election. (FHB)

Safe Use of Pesticides and Veterinary Drugs

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

Elderly Healthcare Services

- Continuing to implement 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

- Continuing to increase the number of community care places for the elderly to support ageing in place. (LWB)
- Continuing to implement 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)

- Planning to implement a pilot scheme under the Lotteries Fund to enhance training for foreign domestic helpers in taking care of elderly persons. (LWB)

Long-term Care Services for the Elderly

- Enhancing and stepping up the inspection and monitoring of residential care homes for the elderly and those for persons with disabilities; helping the industry to improve service quality through various means, including strengthening staff training. (LWB)
- Continuing to increase 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)
- Continuing with the conversion of existing EA2 places of the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme to EA1 places which are of a higher quality. (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)
- Continuing to implement 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)

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- Continuing to enhance the primary medical service for ageing service users at residential care homes by providing subvention under the Visiting Medical Practitioner Scheme. (LWB)

Planning and Integration of Elderly Services

- Continuing to provide support for 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)

Animal Welfare

- Continuing to implement the “Trap-Neuter-Release” trial programme for stray dogs and monitoring and assessing its effectiveness. (FHB)

Municipal Services

- Sustaining our efforts to improve the fire safety and design of hawker stalls in 43 fixed-pitch hawker areas through the five-year assistance scheme launched in 2013. (FHB)
- Continuing our efforts to seek support for public columbarium development on shortlisted sites across the territory whilst promoting green burials in parallel. (FHB)
- Working with the Legislative Council for early enactment of the Private Columbaria Bill. (FHB)

- Continuing to consult stakeholders on concrete improvement proposals for a number of public markets and actively follow up the works. (FHB)

Live Poultry

- With consideration given to the consultant's recommendations, consulting the public on the future of the live poultry trade. (FHB)