

**For discussion
on 11 June 2001**

LegCo Panel on Health Services

Proposed Creation of Supernumerary SPEO Post in Department of Health

INTRODUCTION

This paper seeks Members' comments on the Administration's proposal to create a supernumerary post of Senior Principal Executive Officer (SPEO)(D2) in the Department of Health (DH) for 24 months to coordinate necessary preparatory and planning work related to the Health Care Reform

BACKGROUND

2. In December 2000, the Government published a Consultation Document entitled "Lifelong Investment in Health" for public consultation. The Document sets out the strategic directions for changes and the specific reform proposals for the three main pillars of our health care system, that is, service delivery, quality assurance, and financing arrangements. The issues are complex and the changes are far-reaching. A number of proposals in the Consultation Document relate to the DH and it is obvious that DH will in the future take on a more important role in health advocacy and reduce its emphasis on provision of direct curative services. To prepare for such a transition, the Department needs to start planning work on a number of proposals.

Strengthen Preventive Care

3. Preventive care is the art of preventing diseases and promoting health. It reduces the incidence of diseases, enhances the health status of the population and lowers the overall burden of disease and disability of the community. Better preventive care can be achieved through organized community efforts and personal ownership and responsibility. We propose that the Administration should provide the necessary information, encouragement and infrastructure as well as identify and assess the impacts of social and environmental variables to health. The Department plans to centralize its health promotion functions under the steer of a committee. The move will be supported by a corresponding organizational change. Consideration will be given to outsourcing some promotional activities for better effects.

Re-organize Primary Health Care

4. One of the strategic directions is for DH to phase out its direct medical services and focus on preventive care. As a first step, it will have to consult stakeholders and work out possible arrangements for the staff affected by the proposed transfer of the general out-patient clinic (GOPC) services to the Hospital Authority. The logistics of the transfer and the human resource management implications will have to be carefully considered to minimize disruption of service to the public and be acceptable to the parties concerned.

Enhance Quality Assurance

5. To ensure that quality health services are always maintained and delivered, DH will review the present statutory regulations on the operation of clinics, use of medical facilities/equipment and provision of medical services. In addition, it will examine the various proposals and options on quality assurance and look into the recommendations of continuous education for health care professionals and peer review with suggestions on the logistics.

Improve Patient Complaint Mechanisms

6. In recent years, there are increasing demands in the community for a more transparent and credible patient complaint mechanism. The recent spate of medical incidents has illustrated the magnitude of the underlying problems, which call for immediate action in revamping the current complaint system. Given the complexity and the sensitivity of medical complaints and the diverse interests of various health care professional and patient rights groups, DH will work with the Health and Welfare Bureau and other stakeholders to develop an improved complaint system that is generally acceptable to all parties.

PROPOSAL

7. The above tasks are complex and imminent, and will have significant bearing on the shaping of the future health care services of Hong Kong. Many of the proposals involve thorough examination of existing systems, comprehensive review of related Ordinances and extensive consultation with parties of divergent interests. D of H considers it necessary to have a dedicated directorate officer to assume overall responsibility for coordinating the planning and preparatory work required for taking the proposals forward. The additional directorate support will be crucial to ensure effective coordination of a wide range of initiatives. His major functional responsibilities will embrace the following -

- (a) To develop a detailed plan and timetable for various proposals;
- (b) To seek the views of stakeholders on the relevant proposals and take them into account in drawing up new arrangements;
- (c) To work out the logistics, financial and staffing implications arising from various proposals;
- (d) To propose a revised organization of the Department to support the changes and the new initiatives; and
- (e) To review related legislation and recommend amendments where necessary.

8. The effective performance of the above duties calls for an officer with extensive administrative experience, strong leadership skills and vision. He should be able to work with parties of divergent interests, set workable plans, communicate effectively at all levels and supervise a wide span of work within a tight time-frame. Having regard to the scale and complexity of the tasks involved, D of H considers that the wide-ranging tasks should be undertaken by a dedicated directorate officer pitched at the SPEO level. D of H has reviewed her directorate support and advised that none can afford to take on the additional responsibilities without affecting service operations. As the proposed tasks involve a long drawn-out process, we propose to create a supernumerary post of SPEO for 24 months initially. We shall review the need to retain the post in due course.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9. The additional notional annual salary cost of this proposal at mid-point is \$1,443,000.

10. The full annual average staff cost of the proposal, including salaries and staff on-cost, is \$2,394,000. We have included sufficient provision in the 2001-02 Estimates to meet the cost of this proposal.

ADVICE SOUGHT

11. Members are invited to comment on the proposal to create a supernumerary SPEO post in DH. Subject to Members' views, we shall submit the proposal to the Establishment Subcommittee of Finance Committee for consideration.

Health and Welfare Bureau

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