

(English translation prepared by
the Legislative Council Secretariat
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**Alliance of Professionals for Rehabilitation of Workers
with Occupational Injuries**

The study report published by the Hong Kong Federation of Insurers on 28 November has aroused the attention of the community, especially worker organisations. They have revived their concerns and discussion about the issues faced by the injured workers in Hong Kong. These issues include transferal procedures, arrangement for rehabilitation services, a mechanism for diagnosis of injuries, injured workers' returning to work upon rehabilitation. The Alliance of Professionals for Rehabilitation of Workers with Occupational Injuries (APR), which comprises Hong Kong Occupational Therapy Association, Hong Kong Physiotherapy Association, Hong Kong Physiotherapist Union and Hong Kong Association of Occupational & Environmental Medicine, holds that the Hong Kong SAR government and the authorities concerned should consider improving the existing mechanism expeditiously so that injured workers can have proper rehabilitation services. As such, they can recuperate as fast as possible and rejoin the workforce.

APR wishes to point out that rehabilitation services for injured workers have all along been limited by public resources, insurance compensation and the legislation. In the absence of coordination among these systems, injured workers cannot receive proper professional rehabilitation and therapy. This has an immense impact on the progress and chances of their recovery. In addition, the inadequacy of existing efforts in the protection of local workers, particularly the lack of legislation relating to injured workers' returning to work, has created much more difficulties in the provision of rehabilitation services. The chances for injured workers to rejoin the workforce are slim.

APR is of the view that Hong Kong needs an injured-worker based mechanism with the following four features:

- 1) Allowing rehabilitation medical staff to contact injured workers in the first instance so as to improve the successful rate of rehabilitation and shorten the time required for recuperation;
- 2) With a mechanism to enhance communication between employers and rehabilitation professionals so that injured workers can resume work with flexibility and by phases to facilitate their adaptability in their work;
- 3) With additional resources for rehabilitation services to enable injured workers to receive professional and consistent therapy expeditiously with a view to reducing the waiting time and increasing the effectiveness of rehabilitation;
- 4) With greater involvement of rehabilitation professionals in formulating policies and establishing the mechanism to facilitate optimal use of resources so that the best rehabilitation services are available for the injured workers.

Overseas experience shows that enhancement in rehabilitation services and protection for the workers' rights to rehabilitation may not necessarily increase the cost incurred by employers and insurance companies. On the contrary, if these resources are not used properly and too many intermediaries get in the way of rehabilitation services, injured workers may not get suitable rehabilitation services. This is definitely a loss that the community as a whole will suffer.

APR is now preparing a draft proposal in detail and will submit it to the Government and the authorities concerned upon its completion.

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