

## **LegCo Panel on Health Services**

### **Liver Transplant Arrangement of the Hospital Authority**

#### **Purpose**

This paper briefs Members on the liver transplant arrangements of the Hospital Authority (HA).

#### **Background**

2. The Panel on Health Services last discussed organ transplant arrangements of HA in August 2002. On that occasion, HA indicated that it would take the following measures to improve the mechanism on organ procurement and distribution:

- (a) work out a mechanism for determining the priority of liver transplant recipients in the Queen Mary Hospital (QMH) and the Prince of Wales Hospital (PWH) to ensure that a donated liver will go to the patient most in need of the transplant; and
- (b) monitor the development and clinical outcomes of liver transplantation in QMH and PWH, and review the arrangement for the designation of liver transplant centres.

#### **Review of HA's Liver Transplant Services**

3. At present, QMH is the designated liver transplant centre in HA, while PWH has been performing liver transplant operations mainly for the purpose of research.

4. In 2000, HA engaged a panel of international experts to review the organization and further development of acute surgical services, including liver transplantation, in public hospitals. One of the

recommendations made by the panel was that the provision of highly sophisticated services such as liver transplants should be concentrated in one designated centre so as to enhance the clinical outcome of relevant operations in Hong Kong. The Coordinating Committee on Surgery of HA had then considered this recommendation and decided to monitor further developments before making a decision.

5. In December 2002, HA invited the panel of international experts to review the position again. The panel maintained its previous recommendation that one centre for liver transplantation should be designated. Having examined updated experience and clinical outcome data of QMH and PMH, the panel recommended that QMH should be the designated centre for liver transplantation in Hong Kong. In making the recommendations, the panel has taken into account that evidence worldwide reveals a positive relationship between the quality of outcomes achieved by surgical units in major surgeries such as liver transplantations and the volume of the concerned activity, and the number of liver transplants performed by the two hospitals.

6. Separately, HA has commissioned a local panel, comprising three senior consultant surgeons independent of the two teaching hospitals, to conduct an internal review of its liver transplant services. The local panel came up with the same recommendations as those of the panel of international experts.

7. In the light of the advice of the panel of international experts and the local panel, HA has, in consultation with the hospital management of QMH and PWH, and the Faculty of Medicine of both the University of Hong Kong and the Chinese University of Hong Kong, decided to accept the recommendations of the panels and to centralise liver transplant operations in QMH. In taking forward the recommendations, HA would establish a central registry for liver transplantation and merge the two liver transplant centres.

### **Establishment of a Central Registry for Liver Transplants**

8. To provide a mechanism for determining the priority of liver transplant recipients to ensure that donated livers will go to patients most

in need of the transplant, HA has decided to establish a central registry for liver transplantation. For this purpose, an independent team comprising a senior consultant surgeon and executives from the HA Head Office has recently been set up. The team is tasked with the responsibility of merging the two existing patient registries, on the basis of a set of criteria drawn up with reference to international practices for entering patients into the waiting list for liver transplants and prioritizing patients for receiving liver transplantation in a fair and consistent manner.

### **Merging of Liver Transplant Centers**

9. To enhance the overall quality and cost-effectiveness of liver transplant services in HA, HA has decided to centralize liver transplant operations in QMH. In so doing, HA will ensure that adequate resources will be provided for the merged centre, and the existing capacity to perform liver transplant operations will be maintained after the merger. HA is taking the necessary steps to merge the two liver transplant centres. The merger will take a few months to complete. In-depth discussions on logistics, resource planning and duty arrangements will commence shortly. HA will ensure that appropriate administrative and clinical arrangements are in place to serve the best overall interests of patients.

### **Way Forward**

10. The HA Head Office will coordinate the exercise to ensure a smooth transition. Before the actual merging of the two centres, PWH will continue to perform living and cadaveric liver transplant operations.

### **Advice Sought**

11. Members are invited to note the contents of this paper.

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