

**For information
25 February 2004**

LegCo Panel on Health Services

Cervical Screening Programme

Fees Chargeable for Cervical Screening Service at the Maternal and Child Health Centres of the Department of Health

Introduction

At the Panel meeting on 9 February 2004, the Administration presented the Cervical Screening Programme (CSP) of the Department of Health (DH), and the fee level chargeable to eligible persons seeking cervical screening services at the Maternal and Child Health Centres (MCHCs) of DH under the CSP. The CSP is scheduled for launching on 8 March 2004. This paper follows up on the request of some Members of the Panel to review the fee level of the Programme.

Revised Fee

2. In response to the requests of some Panel Members, the Administration has re-considered the fee level, and suggests to lower it from the originally proposed \$120 to \$100. The objectives are to ensure that the fee charged will not deter the target group from coming forward to use the screening services and to assist those who may be less financially sound. The revision has taken into account the following major factors.

A well-established fee waiving mechanism

3. There is already in existence a medical fee waiver mechanism to assist those who are in financial need. This waiver mechanism will apply to users of DH's cervical screening service. No one will be denied the service due to a lack of means. Participants of the programme who are recipients of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) can enjoy the service free of charge by producing a valid medical waiver issued by the Social Welfare Department. For people in financial difficulty who are not in receipt of CSSA, they can apply for a full or partial fee waiver subject to a simple assessment of their family income and assets by medical social workers or other authorized

persons designated by DH. Under the current mechanism, a waiver certificate can have validity up to 12 months.

Public-private collaboration

4. At the moment, the private sector is a major provider of cervical screening service in Hong Kong. Given the service nature of cervical screening, we expect that a majority of women in the target group may choose to seek the service at the private sector which can provide a more personalized and flexible service. Public/private collaboration is hence crucial to the success of the CSP, and the revised fee level has given due regard to this consideration.

User's views

5. The proposed fee falls within the acceptable range of \$100 - \$200 as suggested by Women Focus Group Study, which was commissioned by the Cervical Screening Task Force in 2002 to ascertain the beliefs, behaviors, attitudes and expectation of women of different age and from diverse background towards cervical screening. This confirms that a fee level of \$100 is unlikely to deter the target group from coming forward for services.

Subsidy level

6. The unit cost of a cervical smear under the CSP is \$206. A fee level of \$100 will mean a government subsidy level of over 50%. This is already higher than the subsidy level for Women Health Service at around 40% under the policy of subsidizing preventive health care services. We consider this to be the lowest level of fee that should be charged.

7. Same as our original proposal, non-eligible persons will be charged at full cost in accordance with the existing policy.

8. We will closely monitor the coverage rate and the pattern of women's participation of the programme, and will review the fee level as appropriate in about a year's time.

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

**Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
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