

## **Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services**

### **Support and Assistance for Paralysed Patients Living in the Community**

#### **PURPOSE**

This paper informs Members of the support and assistance provided by the Administration to paralysed patients living in the community.

#### **BACKGROUND**

2. The wide coverage of the case of “Pun Tsai” has aroused extensive public and media concern for the plight of paralysed patients. Individual paralysed patients’ self-help groups have also suggested the Administration to implement new policies and measures to enhance care and support for paralysed patients who live in the community.

3. According to the figures provided by the paralysed patients’ self-help groups, there are about 300 quadriplegic paralysed patients living in the community. The Administration is aware of their needs and fully recognizes the difficulties faced by their families and carers in looking after them. At present, we provide various support measures and assistance to them and their family members so as to mitigate the difficulties they encounter in living in the community.

#### **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

4. To meet their special needs arising from disabilities, paralysed patients are eligible for non-means tested Higher Disability Allowance. Those with long-term financial difficulties can apply for Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA). Under the existing CSSA system, paralysed patients receiving CSSA can obtain comprehensive subsidy for their daily expenses and special allowance for buying necessary medical supplies.

5. Apart from the disability allowance, paralysed patients who are not entitled to CSSA may also apply to relevant charitable funds through medical social workers, patients’ mutual help groups or voluntary organizations for subsidy to buy medical

supplies and daily necessities. These charitable funds include S.K. Yee Fund for the Disabled managed by the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau, the Samaritan Fund administered by the Hospital Authority (HA) and Li Po Chun Charitable Trust Fund, Tang Shiu Kin and Ho Tim Charitable Fund administered by the Social Welfare Department (SWD). In this connection, the S.K. Yee Fund for the Disabled allocated \$500,000 to the “Hong Kong Neuro-muscular Disease Association” in 2003 to provide financial support for about 10 paralysed patients suffering from muscular dystrophy to buy medical supplies.

6. The existing medical fee waiver mechanism also caters for the special circumstances of paralysed patients. For the means test on applicants under the existing mechanism, the amount of disability allowance received is not counted as their income. Moreover, the residential property owned and occupied by patients or their families does not count towards the asset limit. Medical social workers would also exercise discretion in processing relevant applications, having regard to the special circumstances of individual applicants. A fee waiver may be granted up to 12 months for persons requiring long-term health care service. If an applicant has continual need for fee concession, he may apply for extension of the concession before the expiry of the waiver.

#### **HOME CARE AND SUPPORT**

7. In addition to financial assistance, the Administration provides intensive occupational therapy and physiotherapy services for severely disabled persons living in the community and assists their family members through Home-based Training and Support Service. At present, there are 19 home-based training and support teams providing such service throughout Hong Kong and there are 83 paralysed patients receiving such service. In addition, we plan to extend the Integrated Home Care Service for the elderly to cover severely disabled persons living in the community. Through a multi-disciplinary approach, we will deliver nursing care, personal care, rehabilitation service and social worker service to meet the needs of these disabled persons.

#### **PROMOTING SELF-HELP, MUTUAL HELP AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION**

8. Since 2001, the SWD has allocated about \$2.8 million through the “Financial Support to Self-Help Organisations of People with Disabilities” scheme to four self-help groups of persons with severe physical handicap, namely “The Hong Kong Neuro-Muscular Disease Association”, “Paraplegic and Quadraplegic Association”, “Direction Association for the Handicapped” and “1st Step Association”. The allocation is made to help them develop a wide range of patients’ mutual help activities, volunteer services and information technology education activities in promoting mutual help and social integration.

9. The “Health InfoWorld” under the HA has organized regular classes on health care skills for various diseases in collaboration with patients’ self-help groups, to train patients and their carers on health care skills and facilitate their rehabilitation. “Health InfoWorld” also supports patients’ self-help groups by providing them with venues and facilities for organising activities and functions, fostering self-help and mutual help spirit among the patients.

#### **ADVICE SOUGHT**

10. Members are invited to note the above measures in helping paralysed patients.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau  
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