



LC Paper No. CB(2)2751/05-06(01)

中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部衛生福利及食物局
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
Government Secretariat, Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

Our Ref. : L/M to HWF/ES/3/11 Pt.3(99)

Tel No. : 2973 8110

Your Ref. :

Fax No. : 2521 0132

Your Fax : 2509 9055

12 July 2006

Clerk to Panel on Health Services
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central
Hong Kong
(Attn. Ms Doris Chan)

Dear Ms. Chan,

Special Meeting of the Panel on Health Services on 15 May 2006

At the special meeting of the Panel on Health Services on 15 May 2006, the Administration undertook to report on the outcomes of the discussions with the local pharmacist associations and the sector on the handling of drugs in residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) and the further measures for enhancing the drug handling capability of RCHEs

The Health, Welfare and Food Bureau invited the three local pharmacist associations and various organizations representing local RCHEs in June 2006 to a discussion to exchange views on the issue. The Social Welfare Department (SWD), the Department of Health (DH) and Hospital Authority (HA) were also present. There were divergent and differing views on possible means to help RCHEs enhance their drug handling capabilities. While representatives of individual pharmacist associations held the view that RCHEs should employ pharmacists and dispensers, representatives of the RCHE sector, the

- 2 -

frontline staff and medical doctors considered it more practical and effective to focus on enhancing and systematizing the existing drug handling system of RCHEs, and staff training. Noting that there was on-going co-operation between individual pharmacist associations and individual RCHEs on enhancing the handling of drugs in RCHEs, the RCHE sector expressed willingness to further collaborate with the pharmacist associations on this aspect.

To further address the public concern about the handling of drugs in RCHEs, the SWD and the Elderly Health Services of DH are now working together to further systematize the drug distribution process in RCHEs, and enhance the drug handling know-how and skills of RCHE staff through the following measures:

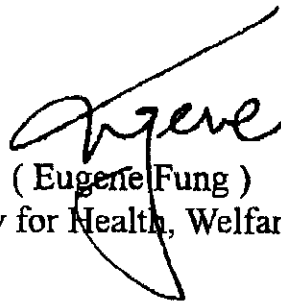
- (a) design a drug management system that suits the local environment of RCHEs, including a detailed manual;
- (b) improve the guidelines on drug storage and facilities in RCHEs;
- (c) reevaluate the drug management standard in RCHEs through various channels, with a view to identifying the weaker links in the existing drug handling process and assisting RCHEs in strengthening those areas; and
- (d) provide more on-site and other forms of training on drug handling to RCHE staff, making reference to their existing problems.

In addition, SWD and the Toxicology Reference Laboratory (the Laboratory) of HA have set up a referral system. When the Laboratory is aware of suspected cases involving elderly residents of RCHEs taking hypoglycaemic medication by mistake, it will inform SWD at the earliest possible moment so that the latter may conduct timely investigations and take follow-up actions promptly.

- 3 -

SWD will continue to conduct investigations on RCHEs which are in breach of the licensing requirements or involved in complaint cases. Where irregularities are found, SWD will require the RCHEs concerned to take immediate remedial measures to rectify the situation, and may take punitive measures in accordance with the law and the principle of fairness. SWD is at present taking prosecution actions against a RCHE which has shown negligence in the handling of drugs and has failed to take remedial measures to the satisfaction of SWD.

Yours sincerely,



(Eugene Fung)

for Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food

c.c. Director of Social Welfare (Attn. Mrs Kathy Ng Fax. 3106 0559)
Director of Health (Attn. Dr W M Chan Fax. 2574 2849)
Chief Executive, Hospital Authority
(Attn : Dr Daisy Dai Fax. 2881 8058)