

Legislative Council Panel on Health Services

Shortage of Nurses & Midwives in the Hospital Authority

The Hong Kong Midwives Association

9th July 2007

Chairman & Members,

I am Sylvia FUNG, representing the Hong Kong Midwives Association to deliver our view on the issue of shortage of nurses and midwives in the Hospital Authority and Hong Kong.

Complexity of Healthcare

Nurses and midwives nowadays are facing more complex clinical problems. There are a few contributing factors :

1. Ageing population does not only bring along more chronic diseases, but also complications that emerge as the disease progresses with the age of the patients.
2. Environmental pollution, stressful and unhealthy lifestyle bring about cardiac and cerebro-vascular diseases at younger age groups, substance abuse of adolescents, emergence of infectious disease, etc.
3. Practice of shortened hospital stay had led to higher acuity and dependency of our patients in the hospital
4. Transformation from extended to nuclear family structure leads to diminished social support to the elderlies, the sick, childbearing and childrearing. Demand on community nursing services is increasing tremendously.
5. Medical technologies are advancing at an ever-increasing pace.

Quality versus Quantity

Contemporary nursing nowadays demand nurses with higher intellectual capabilities. The projected shortage of nurses is not only in terms of numbers. Our patients need nurses and midwives of higher cognitive skills and higher educational levels in order to be competent in addressing the complex medical, psychological, and social problems of diseases. We must uphold our quality of nursing education to ensure safe practices. The 2-year enrolled nurses training

focused mainly on the technological aspects of care and is far from adequate in today's complex care environment, and therefore, must not be taken even as part of the solution.

We are delighted to note that Hospital Authority is reflecting the need to the University Grants Committee to increase the number of university places for nursing programmes. The Hong Kong Midwives Association supports that motion and hopes that the same could happen to midwifery education too.