

For information

**Legislative Council Panel on Health Services
Legislative Council Panel on Security**

**Implementation of the New Obstetric Service Arrangements
and Complementary Immigration Measures**

Introduction

This paper briefs Members on the implementation of the new obstetric service arrangements and complementary immigration measures.

The New Arrangements and Measures

2. On 16 January 2007, we announced new obstetric service arrangements and complementary immigration measures. The objectives of the new arrangements are three-folded, namely to ensure that local pregnant women are given proper obstetric services and priority to use such services; limit the number of non-local pregnant women coming to Hong Kong to give births to a level that can be supported by our health-care system; and prevent non-local pregnant women from putting themselves at risk by turning up at Accident and Emergency Departments of hospitals shortly before labour.

3. Under the new obstetric service arrangements which came into effect from 1 February 2007, all pregnant women (including all non-local women from anywhere without Hong Kong identity cards) planning to deliver in Hong Kong are required to make prior booking with a hospital here for the necessary inpatient obstetric services and undergo antenatal examinations. In support of the new arrangements, the Hospital Authority (HA) has implemented a central booking system for all public hospitals. Sufficient places have been reserved for local pregnant women to ensure that they will have priority in the booking of obstetric services. The HA has also on the same day increased the Obstetric Package Charge for Non-Eligible Persons (NEPs) (i.e. persons not holding Hong Kong Identity Cards) – \$39,000 for those with a booking and \$48,000 for those without one. A booking confirmation certificate is issued to non-local pregnant women who have secured a booking and made the deposit.

4. All private hospitals offering obstetric services similarly have introduced booking systems, with a booking confirmation certificate issued to non-local pregnant women who have secured a booking and paid a deposit for the necessary inpatient services.

5. To complement the new arrangements, the Immigration Department (ImmD) has stepped up arrival checking of all visitors who are at an advanced stage of pregnancy¹. Those visitors whose purpose of visit is believed to be to give birth in Hong Kong are required to produce proof of booking arrangements with a local hospital. Any visitor who cannot meet the immigration requirements concerned may be denied entry.

Implementation

6. In the first two weeks after the implementation of the new arrangements (i.e. between 1 and 14 February 2007), the average daily number of hospital admissions through the Accident & Emergency Departments of non-local women at public hospitals decreased by 53.4% as compared with January 2007. It was also 64.5% lower than that in February 2006. The daily average number of deliveries by non-local mothers at public hospitals in the first two weeks of February 2007 was 20.7, which was 26.9% less than that in January 2007, and 37.5% lower than that in February 2006. The booking system of private hospitals has also been operating smoothly so far.

7. Frontline staff of the ImmD have by and large experienced not much difficulties in stepping up arrival checking of pregnant visitors, most of whom were well aware of the new obstetric services arrangements. From 24 January to 15 February, 2 064 pregnant visitors were invited for secondary examination, 81 of whom were denied permission to enter for various reasons. All these pregnant visitors returned to their place of origin voluntarily.

¹ To minimise disputes, women who have been pregnant for seven months (i.e. 28 weeks) or above will be deemed to be at an advanced stage of pregnancy.

Review

8. The Government and HA will review the new arrangements and measures, and make a report to the Panels on Health Services and Security in May 2007.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
Security Bureau
Immigration Department

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