



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部食物及衛生局
Food and Health Bureau, Government Secretariat
The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

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Miss Mary SO
Clerk to Panel on Health Services
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central
Hong Kong

Dear Miss So,

**Pilot Project to Purchase Primary Care Services
from the Private Sector in Tin Shui Wai**

At the meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Health Services on 14 April 2008, the Chairman requested the Administration to provide information on the progress made on the development of the territory-wide electronic health record (eHR) system, and explain why the Electronic Patient Record Sharing Pilot System of the Hospital Authority (HA) could not be extended to the electronic health care voucher system (the voucher system) at this stage. We would like to provide further information as set out below.

Development of Territory-wide eHR System

As set out in the Healthcare Reform Consultation Document titled “Your Health, Your Life” published on 13 March 2008 (Chapter 4), it is our long-term vision to develop a territory-wide information system for healthcare professionals in both the

public and private sectors to enter, store and retrieve patients' medical records, subject to authorisation by the patients. The development of a territory-wide eHR system can enhance continuity of care as well as better integration of different healthcare services for the benefits of individual patients. It can also facilitate the implementation of various healthcare reforms, including enhancing primary care in both the public and private sectors, as well as promoting public-private partnership in the provision of healthcare services.

To take forward the initiative to develop a territory-wide eHR sharing infrastructure, the Secretary for Food and Health has appointed a Steering Committee on eHR Sharing (the Steering Committee) chaired by the Permanent Secretary for Food and Health (Health) and comprising members from the healthcare professions in both the public and private sectors. The Steering Committee is tasked to develop a work programme for the development of eHR and has set up working groups comprising experts in the relevant field to examine issues relating to eHR development especially privacy, security, technical standards, legal framework and institutional arrangements. It is the current plan of the Steering Committee to formulate its initial recommendations for the work programme in 2008.

Electronic Patient Record Sharing Pilots

As an initiative under the Policy Agenda, the HA initiated the Public-Private Interface – Electronic Patient Record (PPI-ePR) pilot project in April 2006 to allow private doctors, healthcare institutions and elderly homes to access, with patients' consent, the patients' records stored in HA's electronic patient record system. The purpose of the pilot is to assess the technical feasibility and stakeholders' acceptance of sharing electronic patient records between the public and private sectors. So far, some 1 000 doctors, 11 private hospitals, 30 elderly homes (for use by doctors and nurses there) and 30 000 patients have joined the pilot project. The pilot has also been extended to the Personal Emergency Link Service for healthcare enquires handled by nurses. The overall feedback on the pilot is very positive from both doctors and patients. As part of the initiatives to promote the development of eHR sharing under the Steering Committee, the PPI-ePR pilot project will be expanded in 2008-09 to connect to all private hospitals, and to open the pilot for all interested private doctors to participate.

Alongside the PPI-ePR pilot, we have also been initiating other pilot projects for sharing electronic patient records through specific public-private partnership initiatives. For instance, under the pilot projects to purchase primary care services in Tin Shui Wai and purchase cataract surgeries from the private sector, participating private doctors with the patients' consent not only have access to the patients' records stored in HA's database, but also are required under the terms of the service agreements to enter relevant clinical information into the electronic patient record system provided by the HA, such as the diagnosis and prescription for patients.

The sharing of electronic patient records in these initiatives help ensure the continuity of care for individual patients as well as the quality of services provided to the patients through these public-private partnerships.

Electronic Voucher System

The electronic voucher system is designed for the specific purpose of administering the Elderly Health Care Voucher Pilot Scheme (the Scheme). The major functions of the system include managing information of healthcare providers, managing health care voucher accounts for participating individuals, managing the claims and reimbursement of health care vouchers, and monitoring the operation of the voucher scheme. The electronic voucher system will provide the basic infrastructure for similar initiatives of promoting public-private partnership in healthcare through vouchers. The electronic voucher system in itself is thus distinct from the eHR sharing system. The functions of the two systems are complementary but not overlapping. To expedite the development of the electronic voucher system, we have not incorporated the eHR sharing system as part of the electronic voucher system at this stage.

However, it is our plan to promote the PPI-ePR pilot project alongside the health care voucher pilot scheme, so that doctors participating in the health care voucher pilot scheme may also join the PPI-ePR pilot project and have access, with patients' consent, to the patients' records kept by HA. There will also be synergy between the two systems, for instance, doctors participating in both can use the same security token for accessing both systems. For the longer term, it is our intention to look into the integration of the electronic voucher system with the eHR sharing system. This will be made possible by the fact that both the electronic voucher system and eHR sharing system will be developed by making use of HA's existing infrastructure and information technology expertise.

Yours sincerely,



(Bruno LUK)
for Secretary for Food and Health

c.c. Chief Executive, Hospital Authority

(Attn : Dr CHEUNG Ngai-cheung)