



香 港 藥 學 會

The Pharmaceutical Society of Hong Kong

Kowloon G.P.O. Box 73552, Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon, Hong Kong.

Society's Fax: (852) 28080162

E-mail: pharmacist@pshk.hk

Websites: <http://pshk.hk> and <http://pharmacist.org.hk>

May 17 2008

Hon LI Kwok-ying, MH, JP
Chairman
Panel on Health Services
Legislative Council
HKSAR

Dear Chairman,

Health Care Reform Consultation Document -- Your Health Your Life

The Pharmaceutical Society of Hong Kong (PSHK) would like to congratulate the Secretary of Food & Health, Dr. York Chow who has resumed the consultation on the future health care reform. We are in no way discouraging the Bureau to pursue this imminent reform but we do have reservation over the proposals & the consultation process logistics with such an emphasis on the financial aspect of the reform at this stage. The PSHK reckons that there is an imminent need to reform as our current health care **delivery system** is not catching up with the advancement and development occurred in the health care arena in the past few decades.

The title of the consultation document this time is "Your Health Your Life". The Bureau did not hide away this time that the document only touches mainly on reform of the primary medical care sector. But we are not expecting the reform is fragmented and sectorial approach because it is about one's life. We need to address the change of the norm towards the meaning of health which everyone should take an active and responsible role on one's own health. It is not about treatment alone.

We are so concerned over such emphasis on medical care & financial reform it ends up with only cost-escalating and unaffordable health care services. We believe a true and sustainable reform must be based on a **Health Policy** which the SAR Government is still lacking of though there is one guiding principle "No one should be denied adequate healthcare through lack of means.

If we don't have a Health Policy, how could we define adequate? How could both the public & private healthcare sectors plan for their service provision and business development? How we, as the public, know how much we should contribute?

The public at large has been the victim of such lack of policy and direction all along. We clearly understand that if there is no Health Policy laid down it is almost impossible to manage the future health care reform and the finance it incurs.

Poor healthcare manpower planning has been witnessed on and off and it is a barrier to the development & advancement of health care services. Why does such vicious cycle revolving in the last 2 decades? The answer is simple. We don't have a Health Policy. Such deficiency further damages the already wobbling structure of allied health professionals hence affecting the overall health status of the public. There are still many allied health professionals' qualifications are unregistered and the practice standards are unregulated.

Without a Health Policy, who would be the ultimate victim of it? **It is we and mainly the middle class who would suffer.** Take a look at our current situation in air-pollution, nutrition labelling, undesirable medical advertisement, control of health products etc. How could the middle class agree with the risk pooling theory when all these detrimental factors are not properly addressed? The under-privileged will be taken care of by the government though we don't know how adequately it is. The rich will not bother any way because they can afford it. Always it is the middle class who bears the bulk. And it will be even worst if voluntary insurance option is chosen.

Before we can put our bet in any one of the finance options recommended in this consultation paper, being one of the health care providers, we want to know the quality assurance mechanism and future service delivery model the government would endorse first. Everyone wishes to know the price of the product before deciding to buy it or not. But in this consultation document, **we are being asked to pay without knowing what we get.**

Our government prefers little intervention to the market and this worries us most. For health care, even one goes for a complete private market system the government must exercise its control in the accessibility, affordability and quality of all health services. Otherwise, we will end up with the escalating cost like in the USA. Without such determination from the government, it is much better just to revamp the current fee charging of our health care system instead of creating a new supplementary source of health care revenue.

To summarise, we, PSHK, would like to see the Bureau to address the following issues in the consultation document before addressing on the future healthcare financial crisis:

1. Where is the deficiency of our existing system which leads to the anticipated crisis due to aging population?
2. How does the Bureau address health care manpower planning?
3. What action plans does the Bureau have in promoting "Be responsible for your Own Health"?
4. How does our SAR Government address the fragmented approach in Health Policy?
5. When will our out-dated Ordinances & Regulations related to Health Care be revamped as a whole?

In short, what is the Health Policy of Hong Kong? We strongly believe all the above issues contribute to the tabulated future healthcare financial crisis we might end up with. However, if we are not determined to address these issues, we are not optimistic that any of the proposed financial options can tackle the heart of the REFORM issue.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Benjamin Kwong
President
The Pharmaceutical Society of Hong Kong