



會 學 醫 港 香
The Hong Kong Medical Association

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MEMBER OF WORLD MEDICAL ASSOCIATION AND CONFEDERATION OF MEDICAL ASSOCIATIONS IN ASIA & OCEANIA

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**The Hong Kong Medical Association
Submission to the Legislative Council Health Services Panel
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In view of a significant number of patients with mental illnesses, which if mismanaged, may lead to social problems like suicide and homicide, the Hong Kong Medical Association would like to urge the Government to review the mental health and related services currently available in Hong Kong and to have a clear policy on Mental Health.

In 2005 the HKMA Committee on Rehabilitation conducted a Survey on Medical Insurance Coverage on Mental Illness and Mood Disorder. It was found that 10% of the Hong Kong population suffered from mental illness, majority being mood disorder. 95% of patients with mental illnesses are seen in public hospitals, only 5% seen by private doctors. However, due to the shortage of manpower and resources, the waiting time for a new appointment in public services has always been very long. So, it will be beneficial to mental patients if the private sector is more involved in the care of mental patients. The main hurdle is the price differential in medical consultation and therapy between the private and public sectors. If patients have health insurance cover, this could bridge the gap of price differential. However mental illnesses are often excluded in both group and individual health insurance plans.

The Government should emphasize more on medical insurance rather than medisave in health financing, aiming at universal insurance coverage.

The Hong Kong Medical Association is working with the Hong Kong Federation of Insurers to work out a generic product for health insurance, which should also cover outpatient care of patients with mild mental illnesses. We are also lobbying the employers to include mental health care in their group health care plans. If these patients can be managed by general medical practitioners in the outpatient setting, the society will gain in terms of productivity in work and savings in hospital bills.

We urge that the importance of primary care register, which the Hong Kong Medical Association has started in New Territories East and will be extended in other areas such as community network of general practitioners to be initiated in Tin Shui Wai, should be recognized. Government should therefore allocate more resources for the training of doctors in community psychological medicine, who can identify and manage patients with mental health problems in the early stages. Government should also facilitate private-public co-operation in the management of patients with mental illnesses, thus relieving the heavy workload in the public hospitals, which could focus its services to patients with more severe mental illnesses. More training posts and expansion of public psychiatric service are welcome.