

**Subcommittee to Study Issues Relating to Mainland-HKSAR Families**

**Obstetric Services for non-local women**

**PURPOSE**

This paper briefs Members on the latest situation of obstetric services provided by the public hospitals for non-local women.

**GOVERNMENT'S POLICY ON OBSTETRIC SERVICES**

2. It is the Government's policy to ensure that Hong Kong residents are given proper and adequate obstetric services. The demand for obstetric services in Hong Kong by non-local women (including Mainland women), all being Non-eligible persons (NEPs)<sup>1</sup>, has increased rapidly in recent years, and had caused tremendous pressure on the capacity of obstetric service in public hospitals and affected such services to Hong Kong resident. To tackle the issue, the Hospital Authority (HA) has implemented since 1 February 2007 revised arrangements for obstetric service for non-local women<sup>2</sup>, including non-local spouse of Hong Kong residents. The purpose is to ensure that Hong Kong resident women are given priority for proper obstetric service, to limit the number of non-local women coming to Hong Kong to give births to a level that can be supported by our healthcare system; and to deter dangerous behaviour of non-local pregnant women in seeking emergency hospital admissions through Accident & Emergency Departments shortly before labour.

3. HA would reserve sufficient places in public hospitals for delivery by local pregnant women and would only accept booking from NEP when spare service capacity is available. Once the service capacity is reached, HA would

<sup>1</sup> Our public healthcare services are available to our local residents (as Eligible Persons) at highly subsidized rates. Non-local people (as Non-eligible Persons) should pay the specified charges applicable to them for access to our public healthcare services.

<sup>2</sup> Under the revised arrangements, all NEPs who wish to seek obstetric service in public hospitals have to make prior booking and pay for a package charge of \$39,000. For cases of delivery by emergency admission through the Accident and Emergency Departments, the charge would be \$48,000. A booking system is also in place in the private hospitals which would issue booking certificates to non-local women using their delivery services.

stop making bookings for non-local pregnant women. In anticipation of rising service demand from local women, HA announced on 8 April 2011 that public hospitals would stop accepting booking of obstetric service from non-local women from now till the end of 2011, with a view to ensuring adequate service can be provided to local women.

## **NEW MEASURES TO CONTROL THE USE OF OBSTETRIC SERVICE BY NON-LOCAL WOMEN**

4. The Administration is very concerned about the surge of demand for obstetric services in Hong Kong by non-local women and the pressure of our overall obstetric and neonatal care services. The Food and Health Bureau have been discussing with HA, the Department of Health (DH), the representatives of 10 private hospitals that provide obstetric services, the concern groups on Hong Kong's obstetric and neonatal services, the Hong Kong College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and the Hong Kong College of Paediatricians the arrangements for provision of obstetric services to non-local pregnant women next year, with a view to alleviating the pressure on the overall obstetric and neonatal services in Hong Kong.

5. We have proposed a number of measures to ensure local pregnant women are given priority for obstetric services and all mothers delivering in Hong Kong and their babies are safe and given the best of care, as well as to maintain the high professional standard of our services and the sustainable development of obstetric and paediatric services in Hong Kong. Non-local pregnant women who intend to have deliveries in Hong Kong will be required to undergo antenatal checkups by obstetricians in Hong Kong at an appropriate stage for assessment on whether they are suitable to give birth in Hong Kong, and if so the issuance of a "Certificate on confirmed antenatal and delivery booking" which will be standardised by DH. In addition, we will endeavour to combat the improper and unprofessional co-operation between individual local obstetricians and agencies. We will also discuss with the public and private sector to determine in the first quarter of each year the number of non-local pregnant women allowed to give birth in Hong Kong in the following year.

## **ELIGIBILITY TO HIGHLY SUBSIDIZED OBSTETRIC SERVICES**

6. At present, the public healthcare services in Hong Kong are heavily subsidised by the Government. From the population policy perspective, the consideration behind drawing eligibility criterion for receiving public benefits is to accord priority to residents of Hong Kong in providing these heavily subsidized services. It is necessary for the Administration to ensure our public healthcare services can meet public demand and at the same time can sustain in the long-term within limited financial resources. It has been our policy that public healthcare services are provided primarily for Hong Kong residents. Accordingly, only "Eligible Persons" (EPs) (i.e. holders of Hong Kong Identity Card and children who are Hong Kong residents and under 11 years of age) are eligible for the highly subsidised public healthcare services. NEPs are provided with public healthcare services in emergency situations and they may seek non-emergency public healthcare services when there is spare service capacity. However, the rates of charges applicable to NEPs will apply. Fees for public healthcare services are currently charged in accordance with the status of the patients directly using the services and no consideration is given to family relationship. As in the case of obstetric services, fees are charged in accordance with the status of the pregnant women.

7. In 2003, we clarified the definition of EPs to the effect that non-Hong Kong residents who are the spouses or children of Hong Kong residents would be treated as NEPs and charged the NEP rates when using public healthcare services, including obstetric services.

## **WAY FORWARD**

8. The Government is committed to providing quality and priority obstetric services to local women. In the long run, we endeavour to maintain the sustainability as well as professional standards of our obstetric and paediatric services. We have reached consensus with the public and private hospitals providing obstetric services that measures have to be taken together to cap the number of deliveries in Hong Kong with regard to the overall capacity of our obstetric and neonatal care services. On the other hand, based on the number of bookings for deliveries already made with local hospitals, we anticipate that there will be a slight increase in the number of deliveries in Hong Kong this year in comparison with that of last year. HA has already allocated

additional resources and manpower to obstetric departments and neonatal intensive care units of public hospitals. It is anticipated that we are able to cope with the service demand this year.

### **ADVICE SOUGHT**

9. Members are invited to note the content of the paper.

Food and Health Bureau  
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