

**For information
On 13 July 2010**

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

Obstetric Service Arrangements for Non-eligible Persons

Purpose

This paper provides Members with further updates on the obstetric service arrangements for Non-eligible persons (NEPs)¹ in public hospitals.

Public Obstetric Service for NEPs

2. It is the Government's policy to ensure that Hong Kong resident women are given proper and adequate obstetric services. To tackle the problem of rapid increase in the demand for obstetric services in Hong Kong by non-local women (i.e. those being non-Hong Kong residents, including Mainland women) in recent years, which has caused tremendous pressure on the capacity of obstetric service in public hospitals and affected such services to Hong Kong residents, the Hospital Authority ("HA") has implemented since 1 February 2007 revised arrangements for obstetric service for NEPs². The revised arrangements seek to limit the number of NEPs coming to Hong Kong to give births to a level that can be supported by our public healthcare system, and to deter their dangerous behaviour of seeking emergency hospital admissions through Accident & Emergency Departments (A&EDs) shortly before labour. The revised obstetric service arrangements for NEPs apply to all non-local women including those whose husbands are Hong Kong residents.

3. The revised arrangements have been effective in meeting our policy objectives as mentioned in paragraph 2 above. HA has been able

¹ "NEPs", for the purpose of subsidized public medical services, means persons who are not holders of Hong Kong Identity Card issued under the Registration of Persons Ordinance (Cap.177) or children under 11 years of age who are not Hong Kong residents.

² 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 without prior booking and/or who have not attended any antenatal checkup at a HA specialist outpatient clinic, the charge would be \$48,000. This charging policy applies to all NEPs regardless of whether their husbands are Hong Kong residents. HA would reserve sufficient places for Eligible Persons to ensure that they have priority over NEPs in the booking of obstetric services, and HA would only accept booking from NEP when spare service capacity is available.

to meet the service needs of local women and by comparing the first five months of 2010 with the same period in 2006, the number of Hong Kong resident women giving birth in public hospitals has increased by 13.0% while the number of non-Hong Kong resident women giving birth in public hospitals has decreased by 16.5%. Most notably, the number of deliveries by non-Hong Kong resident women in public hospitals through the A&EDs has decreased significantly by 93.1%.

4. Under the existing waiver mechanism within HA, patients who have financial difficulty in paying for the medical fees and charges in HA may apply for waiver of the relevant fees and charges. Each application would be considered on its own merits having regard to relevant factors. To ensure rational use of limited public resources, normally there is no fee waiver for NEP patients for HA services (including obstetric services). Waiver of medical fees and charges for NEP patients may be granted only under exceptional circumstances. The above policy would continue to apply to all HA services including obstetric service.

Refund Arrangement for Obstetric Service Package Charge

5. The payment for the new Obstetric Service Package Charge is non-refundable (except for the special circumstances set out in paragraph 6 below). The objective of the no-refund policy is to provide disincentive for non-local pregnant women to use public obstetric services in Hong Kong and to minimize the abuse of the obstetric booking system and waste of resources through multiple bookings at public and private hospitals.

6. Since October 2007, HA has implemented a policy to provide refund of obstetric service package charge for booked cases under the following two categories of special circumstances based on compassionate grounds –

- (a) in cases involving miscarriage, termination of pregnancy or still birth, a partial refund of not more than \$20,000 may be made subject to deduction of those charges for the hospital services which the patient has received for the concerned pregnancy; or
- (b) in cases involving a change in the patients' status from a NEP to Eligible Person after payment of the obstetric

service package charge of \$39,000 but before the delivery, a full refund may be made subject to deduction of those charges for the hospital services which the patient has received for the concerned pregnancy.

7. HA has recently reviewed the refund arrangement, particularly the amount of refund for cases mentioned in paragraph 6(a) above. The loss of baby due to miscarriage, termination of pregnancy or still birth is a very sad and unfortunate event for the family concerned. HA has decided to revise the amount of refund and fully refund for such cases, that is, from the existing level of \$20,000 to \$39,000. As with the existing refund arrangement, the refund is subject to deduction of those charges for the hospital services which the patient has received for the same pregnancy.

8. The above revised refund arrangement will be implemented upon the issue of a gazette notice in mid-July. Following the existing practice, the refund of the obstetric package charge will be subject to application and approval process. HA would also consider refund application for obstetric package service utilized from 1 February 2007 onwards. In other words, under the revised refund arrangement, those cases which have already received partial refund of the package charge in the past are also eligible to apply for the difference of refund payment.

**Food and Health Bureau
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