

**Information requested by the Subcommittee of the House Committee
of the Legislative Council to
Study Issues Relating to Mainland-HKSAR Families**

At the meeting of the Subcommittee held on 29 June 2009, the Administration was requested to provide information and response on the followings -

- (a) to provide the number of non-local pregnant women giving births in public hospitals in the first five months of 2009, which had been decreased by 9.3% as compared to corresponding period in 2006, together with a breakdown by Mainlanders whose spouses were Hong Kong residents and non-local residents;
- (b) to provide the costing of the obstetric service package charges for booked cases and those cases that sought hospital admission without prior notice in public hospitals which were currently set at \$39,000 and \$48,000 respectively, as well as the rationale for providing only one antenatal check-up under the obstetric service package for NEPs;
- (c) to collect and provide information on the respective numbers of NEPs who were Mainland spouses of Hong Kong residents and other non-local spouses of Hong Kong residents who gave births in private and public hospitals since the implementation of the new obstetric service charges from 1 February 2007; and
- (d) to provide information on the refund arrangements of unused obstetric services by NEPs, including the criteria of refund, basis for determining a refund of 50% of the fees paid at the time of booking, the actual costs incurred after a booking was made, and consider providing refund to those who had not made use of the booked obstetric services due to unforeseeable circumstances such as premature delivery.

Response to item (a)

2. In the first five months of 2009, a total of 3,962 non-eligible persons (NEPs) have given birth in the public hospitals. The Hospital Authority (HA) does not have the breakdown of the NEPs by nationalities since the NEPs are not required to provide their nationality to HA during their booking for service. HA however estimates that the majority of these 3,962 NEPs are Mainlanders. Among them, about 1,400 are spouses of Hong Kong residents. However, this figure is again only a crude estimate as the NEPs are not obliged to provide HA with the information of their spouses.

Response to item (b)

3. To tackle the problem of rapid increase in the demand for obstetric services in Hong Kong by non-Hong Kong resident women in recent years, HA has implemented since 1 February 2007 revised arrangements for obstetric service for NEPs. Under the revised arrangements, all non-local women who wish to seek obstetric service in public hospitals have to make prior booking and pay for a package charge of \$39,000, which covers one antenatal check in specialist out-patient clinic, the delivery and the first three days and two nights stay for the delivery. For cases of delivery by emergency admission through the A&EDs, the charge would be \$48,000.

4. In determining the obstetric package charges, references were made to charges of private hospitals, including those of the private doctors, and comparable charges in HA's private services. Reference was made to the charges of private hospitals so that NEPs would not be attracted to public hospitals because of lower fees.

5. The fees of the HA's private services, which were based on the costs of providing services to private patients, were adopted as the basis for setting the obstetric package charge for NEPs. A reason for setting a higher charge for non-booked cases was due to the higher costs of providing obstetric services to these patients. For example, if NEP mothers had not received any antenatal care before the deliveries, all tests would have to be done on urgent basis and results would need to be made available immediately for patient managements. More staff and resources would be involved in such cases. Having regard to the higher costs involved and the charges of private hospitals, a higher level of rate was set for non-booked cases.

6. As one of the objectives of the obstetric package charges was to encourage appropriate antenatal care and to reduce risks to the NEPs, one antenatal check-up is included in the obstetric service package for NEPs, to ensure basic test and investigation on the mother and foetus will be conducted during the early stage of pregnancy. Through the antenatal check-up, any need for special care could be identified in early stage and the NEP could make her own choice of arrangements (e.g. by using services in the private sector) for additional check up or other follow-up care.

Response to item (c)

7. The information of the total number of live births by Mainland women in public and private hospitals in Hong Kong in 2007 and 2008, with breakdown by the residence status of their spouses, is set out in the Annex.

Response to item (d)

8. HA has implemented since 29 October 2007 the arrangements for the refund of the obstetric service package charge for NEPs under the following special circumstances –

- (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 patient's status from a NEP to EP after payment of the service charge 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.

9. For cases of category (a) above, the amount of refund is set at no more than \$20,000 as an disincentive for NEPs to use public obstetric services, as well as to cover the additional costs incurred by HA in the implementation of the new obstetric services arrangement, which include the cost of operating the booking arrangement and additional manpower cost for providing service.

10. There are two ongoing cases of judicial review (JR) of obstetric service charge for NEPs in public hospitals. We do not consider it appropriate to conduct a review on the obstetric service charges including the related refund arrangements before the conclusion of the JR applications.

Food & Health Bureau
Hospital Authority
July 2009

Annex

Live births born in Hong Kong to Mainland women in 2007-2008

Reference period	Number of live births in Hong Kong ⁽¹⁾	Number of live births born in Hong Kong to Mainland women:			
		whose spouses are Hong Kong Permanent Residents	whose spouses are not Hong Kong Permanent Residents ⁽²⁾	Others ⁽³⁾	Total
2007	70 875	7 989	18 816	769	27 574
2008	78 822	7 228	25 269	1 068	33 565

Source of information : The Census and Statistics Department

- Notes: (1) The figures refer to the total number of live births born in Hong Kong in the reference period counted by the occurrence time of the events (i.e. births actually taking place in that reference period).
- (2) The figures include Hong Kong Non-permanent Residents (persons from the Mainland having resided in Hong Kong for less than 7 years being grouped in this category) and non-Hong Kong residents.
- (3) The figures refer to mainland mothers who chose not to provide the father's residential status during birth registration.