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By fax and mail

7th March 2009

Dr. Joseph Lee Kok Long
Chairman
The LegCo's Panel on Health Services
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Dr. Lee,

We have been asked by the Hospital Authority (HA) to support the government's proposal to embark on a very ambitious project of expanding a hospital based electronic health record system to ultimately cover the whole of HK. { a Hong Kong-wide electronic Health Record System, } This is in fact more advanced than many western countries and ambitiously will develop HK into a leading healthcare city if only it can be proven to be beneficial to HK people.

The benefits claimed by the government and the Hospital Authority in such a wide electronic health record system are numerous but unfortunately we cannot find factual basis to support these. HKDU has been cooperating with HA in the last few years in the PPI-ePR pilot but we cannot see more than a handful of doctors actually using this and reports are that the difficulty lies not only with the doctor having to convince patients and ask their consent, but depend very much on the patients usually elderly to apply and cooperate with HA as well. Logistics kill the project, The patients straight from hospital without even a brief summary of his diagnosis and treatment turn up for the doctor's office for advice. He manages to help the patient to apply to join the PPI-ePR even manages to photocopy the patient's ID card and fax both application form and ID to HA. But he would have to wait days sometimes even to be told that the patient need to go to HA directly to show proof of his address and that there is no patient's mobile telephone number. The existing system cannot be called effective, efficient or user friendly.. This is not just because doctors are not trained to use the internet as many are already conversant with internet use. The same cumbersome frustrating procedure applies to the recently introduced Health Voucher assistance to the elderly and the trouble caused only a few hundred doctors to participate and only a few patients reap the benefit. In fact many of the so called practicing doctors using the computer to obtain health vouchers for their patients are employees of large money making health organizations



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with resources and ample man power. By supporting the authorities be it the government or the HA to expand this electronic system Legco only assist profiteering health management organizations and driving many private doctors out of business but definitely will not benefit the whole of HK.

When considering being party to using large public funds to develop such a project likened to a white elephant, Legco members please consider the facts of how and to what extent HK patients are now helped by the existing examples of electronic health records. Also please study how electronic records within the government are being utilized and whether the benefits are as claimed. Has government meetings been replaced with paperless electronic means and intra and interdepartmental communications now treated the same way as the proponents of developing a territory wide electronic health record? We have not reminded our honorable Legco members the many medical and otherwise calamities, instances where electronic data of patients and police and other government departmental data were leaked or lost.

In conclusion, HKDU can only lend support to further develop the sharing of information through electronic records but must be with drastic improvement in simplicity of use and logistics in order to be actually useful to assist patient care. The allotment of funds can only be granted on meeting this condition and that doctors be provided with computers, training in the use of this system free of charge and that there will be no charge to patient and doctors now or in the future since this is a government move to facilitate her administration. All over the world we have not come across such a system yet and HK must not be naïve and ambitious enough to strive to be a leading healthcare city just by doing such a drastic move. Already there is talk that unless doctors join in this city wide ePR they will not be allowed to be part of the Public Private partnership patients sharing programme. This is of course discriminatory and sounds like forcing all doctors to concur with government's ambition.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Ho Ock Ling
Hon. Secretary
Hong Kong Doctors Union