

# 立法會 *Legislative Council*

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## **Panel on Health Services**

### **Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the meeting on 10 November 2008**

#### **Promotion of organ donation**

#### **Purpose**

This paper gives an account of the past discussions by the Panel on Health Services (the Panel) on the storing of a person's organ donation details through electronic means and the progress of the development of a centralised organ donation register (CODR) to facilitate organ donation and the associated promotion efforts.

#### **Background**

2. In Hong Kong, a person who wishes to donate his/her organ(s) after death for transplant purposes may record the wish by either signing and carrying an organ donation card, or making the wish known to his/her family members. The person is not required to inform or register with the Department of Health (DH) on his/her signing of the card. The Government therefore has no information on the number of people who have signed organ donation cards.

3. Since 1994, the Hong Kong Medical Association (HKMA) has set up a register for voluntary registration of information and details of organ donors in Hong Kong. Prospective organ donors are invited to sign and return HKMA's organ donation forms, which are then scanned and stored in a computer database. Remote access to the database is provided for major transplant centres under the Hospital Authority (HA), so that Transplant Co-ordinators of HA can access the registration records and arrange for possible organ donation accordingly.

4. The policy initiative to develop a CODR in consultation with relevant organisations was announced by the Chief Executive in his 2006-2007 Policy Address. The purpose of developing a CODR is to make it more convenient for prospective donors to voluntarily donate organs after their death, and for such a wish to be more reliably kept and retrieved by authorised persons, such as Transplant Co-ordinators of HA. The CODR will be set up and maintained by DH.

## **Past discussions**

5. The Administration sought the Panel's views at its meeting on 13 February 2006 on storing a person's organ donation details through the Smart ID Card or a backend computer system to supplement the current organ donation card system.

6. Members considered the proposal of incorporating a person's organ donation details in a backend computer system more preferable to storing the details in the Smart ID Card, as the latter arrangement was at variance with the view generally held by Members of the Legislative Council (LegCo) that personal data stored in the ID Card should be kept to a minimum for privacy purpose. Furthermore, the introduction of a backend computer system did not require any legislation and was more straightforward. Having considered members' views, the Administration undertook to pursue the setting up of a backend computer system for storing a person's organ donation details as the first option as a start.

7. The Administration briefed the Panel at its meeting on 12 February 2007 of the progress of the development of CODR and the associated promotion efforts. Members noted that phase I of the CODR project would consist of setting up a computer database located in DH and providing secured network links for Transplant Coordinators to access the database through terminals in HA hospitals. Phase II of the project would include providing more channels for registration as organ donors, including electronic means such as online internet interface etc. As regards the associated promotional efforts on organ donation, the activities included appealing to various Government departments, non-governmental organisations and private companies to solicit their support in making organ donation cards/forms readily available to their employees and clients, coordinating a "Train-the-trainer" programme to train young people and secondary school students to promote the organ donation message among their peers and family members, exploring providing facilities for clients of various public services to register as organ donor, e.g. during application of driving licence, vehicle licence registration, passports, etc., and distributing organ donation forms through public service counters and bills.

8. A member asked whether consideration would be given to adopting an "opt-out" approach for organ donation whereby everyone was regarded as organ donor unless he/she had indicated otherwise. The Administration advised that it would not be appropriate for Hong Kong at this stage given the prevailing societal value, albeit public attitude on organ donation having changed significantly in recent years.

9. In response to members' concern about the security of organ donation details stored in CODR, the Administration advised that the CODR would incorporate features to ensure protection of data confidentiality and security, including access by persons authorised by DH.

## **Latest development**

10. The Secretary for Food and Health informed the Panel at its special meeting on 17 October 2008 that the CODR was expected to come into operation in November 2008. The HKMA was now seeking consent from some 40 000 registered donors in its existing

organ donation register for transferring their data in the register to CODR. With the setting up of the CODR, the Administration would step up effort in the promotion of registration for organ donation among the public through collaboration with relevant organisations.

**Relevant papers**

11. Members are invited to access the LegCo's website (<http://www.legco.gov.hk>) for details of the relevant papers and minutes of the meetings.

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