

For Information

Legislative Council Panel on Public Service

**The Administration's Response to the Issues Raised at the Meeting
held on 19 April 2010**

At the Public Service Panel meeting held on 19 April 2010, the Administration was requested to provide information on the following issues relating to the provision of medical and dental benefits for civil service eligible persons (CSEPs) –

- (a) progress on the implementation of the “Electronic Patient Record Sharing Pilot Project”, in particular, the sharing of electronic records of patients between the Department of Health (DH) and the Hospital Authority (HA);
- (b) reasons for the discharge of the Government's contractual responsibility to provide medical benefits to CSEPs through HA and copies of relevant supporting legal and contractual documents between the Government and HA; and
- (c) whether and how the annual costs incurred by HA could be separated into those for the provision of medical services to CSEPs and those for the general public.

Our response is set out in the ensuing paragraphs.

“Electronic Patient Record Sharing Pilot Project”

2. To enhance continuity of care and enable better integration of different healthcare services for the benefit of individual patients, the Food and Health Bureau set up an eHealth Record Office in July 2009 to steer and oversee the implementation of the ten-year electronic health record (eHR) Programme (2009/10 to 2018/19) aimed at developing a territory-wide eHR sharing system based on patients' express and informed consent. With the eHR sharing system, patients attended by public and private healthcare providers would not need to worry about the transfer of their health records among the different service providers. One of the objectives of the First Stage eHR Programme is to set up the

eHR sharing platform by 2013/14 for connection with all public and private hospitals.

3. Prior to the commissioning of the territory-wide eHR sharing system, the Government has, in collaboration with HA, launched a pilot Public Private Interface-Electronic Patient Record Sharing Pilot Project since 2008 to allow more private healthcare providers to access their patients' medical records kept at HA with a view to promoting the sharing of patients' records and preparing for the participation of healthcare providers in the eHR sharing system in future. HA is currently working with DH to expand the pilot project to cover DH's clinical services to facilitate sharing of health records within the public sector. DH is working to finalise the arrangement by 2010/11.

4. In parallel with the development of the eHR sharing system, DH will develop a Clinical Information Management System with eHR sharing capacity for its Families Clinics, Social Hygiene Service, Clinical Genetic Service, Antenatal Service and Dental Service, as well as other related systems. It is expected that, with patients' express and informed consent, their eHRs could be shared between DH and HA and other participating private healthcare providers on the territory-wide eHR sharing system by 2013/14.

HA's Role in Providing Medical Services to CSEPs

5. Prior to April 1989, the then Medical and Health Department (M&HD) performed the dual role of providing medical services to CSEPs as well as to the general public. M&HD was re-organised into the then Hospital Services Department (HSD) and DH on 1 April 1989. The two new entities continued to provide medical services to CSEPs and the general public. Specifically, HSD provided inpatient and specialist out-patient services, while DH provided general outpatient services. In addition, DH also provided dental services to CSEPs and operated a few families clinics for CSEPs. In anticipation of the establishment of HA in 1990 and the consequential dis-establishment of HSD, the Administration considered and decided to continue with the same arrangement, namely that the same entity should continue to provide inpatient and specialist outpatient services to CSEPs and the general public. Following discussions with HA (and its predecessor, the Provisional HA), the Administration entered into an agreement with HA on the arrangements for the provision of medical services for CSEPs by HA. This agreement has later been extended to cover general outpatient services when the management of the said services was transferred from DH to HA in 2003.

We do not consider it appropriate to make available copies of the relevant agreement.

Separating the Costs Incurred by HA for Provision of Medical Services to CSEPs and those to the General Public

6. The Government provides HA with an annual subvention to enable it to provide medical services to the general public and to CSEPs. As the subvention takes the form of a lump sum, there is no readily available information on the actual amount of subvention spent by HA for each of these two groups. And it will be a complicated and time-consuming exercise to separate the annual expenditure of HA into two accounts: one for the provision of medical services to the general public and another for the provision of medical services to CSEPs. Pending such separation, the Administration will continue to explore and discuss with HA possible enhancement measures to further improve the provision of medical services to CSEPs without affecting the level of medical services to the general public.

Civil Service Bureau
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