



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部食物及衛生局

Food and Health Bureau, Government Secretariat  
The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region  
The People's Republic of China

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4 March 2011

Dr CHOI Kin  
President  
The Hong Kong Medical Association  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Duke of Windsor Social Service Building  
15 Hennessy Road  
Hong Kong

Dear Dr CHOI,

### **Elderly Health Care Voucher Pilot Scheme**

Thank you for your letter dated 25 January 2011 to the Chief Executive concerning the Elderly Health Care Voucher Pilot Scheme (the EHCV Scheme). I am authorized to reply to you on his behalf.

We appreciate that the Hong Kong Medical Association (HKMA) attaches great importance to the EHCV Scheme in enhancing primary healthcare for the elderly, and has been proactively taking steps to promote preventive care for the elderly through the use of vouchers. We have no doubt that HKMA takes seriously the ethics and practice of medical practitioners, not least in their provision of healthcare services to the elderly under the EHCV Scheme. Indeed the community would expect no less. The fact that we share these in common in taking forward the EHCV Scheme would be instrumental to making the Scheme a success in enhancing primary healthcare for the elderly.

I would like to reassure you that the Government including the Food and Health Bureau always regards the medical profession as our staunch and indispensable partner in enhancing the health and well-being of the population. As HKMA is well aware, collaboration with the medical profession in delivering healthcare for the community has been continuing and growing over the years, with the EHCV Scheme being one of the many initiatives the Government has launched in partnership with the medical profession. It would be regrettable if the collaboration and trust we have established with the medical profession over a long period is disrupted unwarrantedly by sporadic reports in the media, whether speculative or alleged ones. I am sure members of the medical profession will place their trust in our relationship built up through continuous dialogues and actions instead of intermittent hearsay.

We are also pleased to receive the feedback of HKMA on the operation of the EHCV Scheme, which as always is taken seriously and in the past has helped us devise various measures to improve the Scheme. As you are aware, an interim review of the EHCV Scheme has just been completed and will be released in early March. Based on the findings of the review, we have recommended to the Financial Secretary, as he has just announced in this year's Budget, to extend the Scheme by a further three-year pilot period starting from 2012 and increase the annual amount of vouchers to \$500. The interim review has also identified a number of areas requiring our attention together with the medical profession, including the desirability for more medical practitioners to enroll in the scheme to provide wider choices to the elderly, for more emphasis on preventive care among the elderly in the use of vouchers, and the need for greater transparency on co-payment made in conjunction with vouchers. We would make recommendations to better address these shortcomings as identified in the interim review.

We share your concerns about suspected fraud. Please rest assured that the Department of Health has put in place a robust monitoring mechanism to check and audit the usage of health care vouchers, including electronic monitoring for aberrant claim patterns and on-site inspection of service records related to the claims, to ensure proper disbursement of funds for voucher claims. Targeted investigations are also carried out on suspicious transactions and complaints. Any irregularities detected would be followed up and rectified. In the case of proven abuses, the healthcare service providers concerned will be removed from the Scheme. Where suspected fraud is involved, the case will be reported to the Police for investigation. So far, three cases have been referred to the Police. Two medical practitioners and one Chinese medicine practitioner have been disqualified from the Scheme.

Regarding your concerns over reimbursement, the Department of Health has pledged to reimburse enrolled healthcare service providers for voucher claims made under validated accounts through the eHealth System within 30 days after the end of each month. According to the Department, so far this performance pledge has been met in full. For transaction claims made for persons for whom accounts cannot be validated in the first instance for various reasons, the Department of Health will follow up accordingly and arrange reimbursement to the healthcare service providers after investigation in a timely manner. If HKMA or any medical practitioner has any complaint or feedback about the reimbursement arrangements, please let us and the Department know.

We look forward to the continued support and co-operation of HKMA in taking forward the EHCV Scheme especially in its extension and enhancement, with a view to achieving successfully the objective of the EHCV Scheme for the betterment of the health of the elderly population.

Yours sincerely,



( Chris SUN )

for Secretary for Food and Health

c.c. Private Secretary to Chief Executive  
Director of Health  
Chairman, Panel on Health Services ( Attn: Dr Hon LEUNG Ka-lau )  
All Members of the Legislative Council