



SERVING THE COMMUNITY THROUGH QUALITY EDUCATION, CARING PRACTICE AND ADVANCEMENT OF HEALTH SCIENCES

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Dr the Hon KL Leung
Chairman
Health Services Panel
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road, Central
Hong Kong

Dear Dr Leung,

Re: Implementation of Hospital Accreditation in Hong Kong

I am writing to express my strong support for the continued implementation of hospital accreditation programme in Hong Kong based on international experience and positive outcomes of the pilot scheme of hospital accreditation undertaken by a total of eight public and private hospitals in the past two years.

There is a global trend towards the pursuit of health care quality pertaining to patient safety, service quality and effective resources management. One recognized approach to managing and improving quality on a hospital-wide basis is implementation of hospital accreditation. Accreditation provides a visible commitment to the community and health care workers of a hospital's pursuit for safe environment, continuous quality improvement and accountability.

Hospital accreditation is not new. Systematic approach to hospital accreditation started over 2 decades ago in the United States of America. Accreditation ensures a system of safe practice through competent and credentialed clinical staff. Patients are provided reasonable access to service and appropriate information on services, facilities and level of care. Diverse needs and rights of patients of different ethnic groups or religious backgrounds are respected and patients' satisfaction is regularly evaluated. Experience of many countries has shown that hospital accreditation can bring about significant benefits to various stakeholders, and patients are the biggest beneficiaries.

In the local context, I am glad to see that the Government has taken the lead and has embarked on a pilot scheme to introduce hospital accreditation as a quality assurance and improvement initiative in both private and HA hospitals. Although Hong Kong is a small place by geographical area and population, the standard and level of its health care services in terms of various health indicators, efficiency and cost-effectiveness is amongst the best in the world. Building on this excellent foundation, it is only logical for hospital accreditation to be implemented and sustained in all hospitals in Hong Kong.

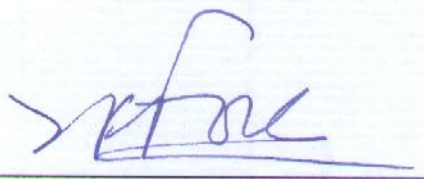
As evidenced by the outcome of pilot scheme, accreditation has stimulated hospitals to promote continuous improvement system and culture with positive impact on organizational communication, team work, staff morale and hospital reputation. It has enhanced organization transparency and community's confidence to the services provided. More importantly, it has also provided a level playing field and excellent collaboration platform for both public and private hospitals in Hong Kong.

Throughout the implementation the pilot scheme in the past years, I am conscious of the fact that there were different opinions and sentiments, especially from the frontline clinical staff, towards accreditation. This is understandable as hospital accreditation in its present form is entirely new to HA hospitals. Front-line staff might be perplexed and worried by the uncertainties of change and inadequate information or understanding on accreditation. In some clinical areas, implementation was fraught with difficulty because of additional preparatory work in face of manpower constraints. Thus, to sustain the momentum and the benefits of hospital accreditation, there is certainly room for improvement in the planning and implementation of the extension scheme to all HA hospitals in the future.

Learning from the experience of the pilot scheme and feedback from staff, it is imperative for the Government and HA to consider providing additional training as well as appropriate human and financial resources to ensure that the issues of additional work generated by hospital accreditation and manpower shortage would not be impediments to implementation of accreditation to all HA hospitals. With prudent planning and judicious injection of resources, I am confident that hospital accreditation will become a major milestone in the quality journey of healthcare services in Hong Kong and our staff will be benefitted from the better and safer working environment in the long run.

Accreditation is recognised internationally as the proven means to assure continuous quality improvement in hospitals and healthcare services. I have no hesitation in supporting and urging the Government to continue its policy on territory-wide implementation of hospital accreditation for the benefit of patients, staff and the community of Hong Kong.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Prof FOK Tai-fai', is written over a horizontal line.

Prof FOK Tai-fai

Dean

Faculty of Medicine

The Chinese University of Hong Kong