

**For information
on 10 July 2012**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON HEALTH SERVICES

The "Approved Person" arrangement adopted by the Hospital Authority for the pharmacies of its General Outpatient Clinics

PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members on the "Approved Person" arrangement adopted by the Hospital Authority (HA) for the pharmacies of its General Outpatient Clinics (GOPCs).

BACKGROUND

2. Under the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance¹ (Cap.134) and the Pharmacy and Poisons Regulations² (Cap. 138A), pharmacies of hospitals and outpatient clinics are required to have a registered pharmacist or a person approved by the Director of Health to possess and supply dangerous drugs and to supervise the dispensing of poisons. Before the Hospital Authority (HA) took over the management of the GOPCs in July 2003, there were 59 GOPCs under the Department of Health (DH). Senior dispensers and dispensers had all along been in charge of and been responsible for possessing and supplying dangerous drugs and supervising the dispensing of poisons in all GOPC pharmacies. The dispenser grade staff were approved by the Director of Health to perform these duties under the then DH's clinics in accordance with the aforesaid Ordinance and Regulations. This is referred to as the "Approved Person" arrangement.

3. To ensure the smooth operation of GOPC pharmacies and in view of the genuine operational needs in providing pharmaceutical services to GOPC attendants, HA has continued to adopt the "Approved Person" arrangement after it took over the 59 GOPCs from DH in July

¹ Dangerous drugs refer to the drugs or substances specified in Part I of the First Schedule of the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (Cap. 134). At present, about 300 of registered drugs in Hong Kong are under this category.

² Poisons refer to the substances which are specified in the Poisons List prescribed by the Poisons List Regulations (Cap. 138B). At present, over 12 000 of registered drugs in Hong Kong are under this category.

2003. In 2003, the Director of Health approved the extension of the “Approved Person” status of 93 dispenser grade staff transferred from DH to HA for three years. In addition, HA recruited 45 additional pharmacists to manage the pharmaceutical services of GOPCs. Since 2011-12, HA has employed over 20 additional pharmacists for the GOPCs in order to strengthen the pharmacist support and enhance the overall efficiency of pharmaceutical services in the GOPCs. In tandem, the Director of Health approved the extension of the “Approved Person” arrangement for the GOPCs in 2006, 2009 and 2012; and the number of “Approved Persons” has gradually decreased from 93 senior dispensers and dispensers in 2003 to 34 senior dispensers in July 2012. The work of the “Approved Persons” is the same as that when they worked in the GOPC pharmacies under DH’s management in the past.

“THE APPROVED PERSONS’ ARRANGEMENT

4. At present, HA has already, for each of the GOPCs, deployed pharmacists to be in charge of the pharmacies and be responsible for the management of their daily operation. While a significant majority of the 59 GOPCs are deployed with on-site pharmacists during their operative hours, there are a few cases where pharmacists are deployed to manage more than one GOPC pharmacies with a view to achieving optimal use of manpower resources. With the enhancement of manpower of pharmacists over the years, the “Approved Persons” are not required to be in charge of the GOPC pharmacies but they have to perform the duties of possession and supply of dangerous drugs as well as supervising the dispensing of poisons in the absence of on-site pharmacists and when there is a service need.

5. HA applies to the Director of Health on a regular basis for extending the “Approved Person” status of some senior dispensers and dispensers working in the GOPCs having regard to the operational need, so that they can continue to perform dispensing-related duties in accordance with the aforesaid Ordinance and Regulations. The extension of the “Approved Person” status with the Director of Health’s written approval complies with the law. HA has also issued written notice to the concerned staff on the Director of Health’s approval for extending their “Approved Person” status in the GOPCs since 2009. HA has been communicating closely with the concerned staff and the dispenser staff associations on the need to extend the “Approved Person” status of some dispenser grade staff.

STAFF COMPETENCE AND TRAINING

6. At present, all dispensers working in the HA pharmacies (including those GOPC dispenser grade staff transferred from DH to HA in July 2003) have attained the level of Certificate in Dispensing Studies or Higher Diploma in Pharmaceutical Technology. They have undergone professional training in actions and uses of drugs and drug dispensing practice. After they joined HA, dispenser grade staff also receives a variety of continuous professional development training every year, covering pharmacy practice, drug knowledge as well as personal and career development etc., to cope with service needs.

7. Dispenser grade staff of HA are professionally competent to perform dispensing-related duties in the GOPC pharmacies. As the primary workforce in HA pharmacies, the dispenser grade has been providing quality pharmaceutical services for the community and is instrumental to the continuous modernization of HA's pharmaceutical services.

WAY FORWARD

8. HA will keep in view the service development and operational needs of GOPCs and deploy its manpower flexibly and determine the appropriate staff mix in order to deliver quality and safe pharmaceutical services to meet patients' needs.

ADVICE SOUGHT

9. Members are invited to note the content of the paper.

**Food and Health Bureau
Hospital Authority
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