

For information

Legislative Council Panel on Health Services

**Provision of
Cataract Surgeries in Hospital Authority**

PURPOSE

This paper sets out the latest position regarding the provision of cataract surgeries in the Hospital Authority (HA) and the progress of the Cataract Surgeries Programme.

OVERVIEW

2. Over the years, there has been a steady increase in the number of patients requiring cataract surgeries in hospitals under the management of HA. Since the prevalence of cataract increases with age, it is anticipated that the demand for cataract surgery will continue to grow with the ageing population. It is projected that there will be about 25 000 to 30 000 new cataract cases per year in the next few years.

3. To better address the service demand and reduce the waiting time for patients, HA has been implementing a series of measures to increase cataract surgeries throughput. The annual clinical throughput of cataract surgery has been substantially increased from 16 000 in 2007-08 to 28 245 in 2012-13. Coupled with the introduction of the Cataract Surgeries Programme in 2008 to provide patients with subsidy for undertaking cataract surgeries in the private sector, there is a significant reduction of waiting time for cataract surgeries. As at end-March 2013, the notional waiting time for cataract surgery in HA has been shortened to about 15 months. Details of the throughput for cataract surgeries in the past six years are at **Annex 1**. The notional waiting time by hospital clusters from 2008 to 2013 is at **Annex 2**.

MEASURES IN WAITING TIME MANAGEMENT

4. In recent years, HA has been implementing a series of measures in managing the waiting time for cataract surgeries. Details of the measures are provided in the following paragraphs.

(a) Increase HA Service Throughput

5. HA Cluster Eye Teams have increased cataract surgeries throughput by increasing the number of surgeries in day time, providing additional operation sessions after office hours and over weekends, as well as facilitating cross cluster referrals for patients who agree to have surgeries conducted in other clusters having a relatively shorter waiting time. As a result, the annual throughput was increased by about 11 000 surgeries in 2012-13 as compared with 2007-08.

(b) Setting Up of Cataract Centres

6. HA established the Cataract Centres at Grantham Hospital of Hong Kong West Cluster and Tseung Kwan O Hospital of Kowloon East Cluster in 2009 and 2011 respectively. These Cataract Centres adopt a model under which designated staff undertake operations for patients in operating theatres equipped with state-of-the-art facilities in an ambulatory setting. The Centres have also boosted service capacity through simplified procedures, modified patient flow and enhanced efficiency. The notional waiting time for cataract surgeries for Hong Kong West Cluster and Kowloon East Cluster was substantially shortened from 37 months to 7 months, and 127 months to 13 months respectively in March 2013 as compared with March 2008.

(c) Triage and Prioritization

7. HA has implemented the patient prioritization system for elective operation of cataract surgeries to ensure that urgent conditions requiring early intervention are treated with priority. Under the current triage system, referrals of new cataract patients are screened by an ophthalmologist for classification into priority 1 (urgent cases such as mature cataract, eye with poor vision), priority 2 (early cases such as for occupational needs) and routine categories. HA's targets are to carry out elective cataract surgery within 2 months for priority 1 patients, and within 12 months for priority 2 patients.

(d) Cataract Surgeries Programme

8. To shorten the waiting list for cataract surgeries and the waiting time for such surgeries, HA introduced a pilot Cataract Surgeries Programme (CSP) in February 2008 under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) delivery model. Under the CSP, patients who have been on the HA clusters' routine cataract surgery waiting lists for a specified period are invited to join the Programme on a voluntary basis to undertake surgeries in the private sector with a fixed government subsidy of \$5,000 subject to co-payment of no more than \$8,000 for each cataract surgery. For patients (including the elderly) with limited economic means such as recipients of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance and patients granted with medical fee waiver, they can choose to receive surgeries without co-payment in the public hospitals through additional operating services. The Programme can therefore provide more choices for patients while expediting the conduct of surgeries for patients.

9. As at June 2013, a total of 109 private ophthalmologists (about 85% of the total registered private ophthalmologists in Hong Kong) have joined the CSP to conduct surgeries for patients who choose to use the service in the private sector. So far, HA has invited a total of 69 343 eligible patients on the waiting list for cataract surgeries to join the CSP. A total of 18 749 patients joined the Programme, and 14 478 of them have already undertaken surgeries.

10. The CSP has contributed to the provision of additional cataract surgeries throughput, shortening notional waiting time, and improved cost-effectiveness. Positive feedback was received from participating patients in regular surveys conducted by HA. Over 98% of the patients surveyed were satisfied with the CSP and agreed that their surgeries dates were advanced due to the implementation of the Programme.

(e) Enhancing Transparency

11. HA recognizes the importance of enhancing transparency in services and maintaining public accountability and confidence in HA services. Since April 2013, HA has uploaded waiting time for cataract surgeries on HA's website. The information will facilitate patients' understanding of the waiting time situation in HA and make informed decisions in treatment choice and plans.

WAY FORWARD

12. HA will continue to provide an annual throughput of about 25 000 cataract surgeries in HA hospitals and implement the CSP through the PPP model with the target of providing 7 500 additional cataract surgeries through the private sector. It is estimated that the throughput of cataract surgeries of HA hospitals will generally be able to meet the demand arising from the new cataract cases in the next few years. HA will continue to manage the waiting time for cataract surgeries, and make appropriate service provision to meet the demand of the ageing population.

ADVICE SOUGHT

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

**Food and Health Bureau
Hospital Authority
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Annex 1

Number of Cataract Surgeries Performed

	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
All HA Hospital Clusters	16 000	16 784	19 603	25 372	28 648	27 345
Cataract Surgeries Programme (CSP) #	-	5 304	1 840	3 228	2 703	900
Total	16 000	22 088	21 443	28 600	31 351	28 245

The CSP was started in February 2008 and thus no figure is available for 2007-08.

Notional Waiting Time (months) of Cataract Surgeries in HA

HA Clusters	Notional Waiting Time (months) as at					
	31.3.2008	31.3.2009	31.3.2010	31.3.2011	31.3.2012	31.3.2013
Hong Kong East	30	46	32	32	18	13
Hong Kong West	37	50	5	3	1	7
Kowloon Central	56	55	26	25	19	18
Kowloon East	127	127	40	37	16	13
Kowloon West	10	14	19	22	22	20
New Territories East	26	29	33	23	19	15
New Territories West	27	30	16	19	20	21
HA Overall	37	44	25	22	16	15