



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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Mr Colin Chui
Clerk to Welfare Services Panel
Legislative Council Panel on Health Services
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Mr Chui,

Support for elderly persons who are in need of dental care

I refer to the follow-up actions requested by Members at the meeting of the Welfare Services Panel held on 30 June 2014. We would like to provide our responses as below.

(1) To provide the reasons for not being able to set up government dental clinics in all the 18 districts

2. All along, proper oral health habits can effectively prevent dental diseases. Given cost-effectiveness considerations, the Government's policy on dental care seeks to raise public awareness of oral hygiene and oral health and encourage proper oral health habits through promotion and education. In this connection, the Government has been allocating resources primarily to promotion and preventive efforts. The Oral

Health Education Unit of the Department of Health ("DH") has, over the years, implemented oral health promotion programmes targeted at different age groups and disseminated oral health information through different channels.

3. The government dental clinics under the DH are tasked to provide dental services to civil servants/pensioners and their eligible dependents in fulfilment of their conditions of service and as part of the Government's contractual obligations. The DH provides free emergency dental services to the public through designated sessions in 11 government dental clinics (generally referred to as "General Public Sessions" (GP Sessions)). Emergency dental services at GP Sessions cover treatment of acute dental diseases, prescription for pain relief, treatment of oral abscess and teeth extraction. The dentists also give professional advice with regard to the individual needs of patients. The Government currently focuses on providing free emergency dental services treatments to the public. Curative dental services are mainly provided by the private sector and non-government organizations in Hong Kong.

4. Currently, the government dental clinics are at full service capacity, that is, almost 100% occupation of all appointment time slots. Therefore, there is no spare capacity for expansion of GP sessions.

5. Besides, only a few countries around the world can meet all the dental care needs of their citizens solely with public resources. The citizens in these countries usually have to bear higher medical insurance cost. As for Hong Kong, providing comprehensive dental care services to the public will involve substantial financial resources. Therefore, apart from promotion; education (including Student Dental Care Service) and publicity efforts, the Government focuses on according resources to people with special needs, especially elderly with financial difficulties. Details are found in ensuing paragraphs.

(2) To revert to the Panel regarding the suggestion of soliciting help from private dentists to provide dental services for the needy elderly at elderly health centres and government dental clinics outside the normal operating hours.

6. The Government has launched a series of initiatives to provide financial support for the elderly to receive dental care and oral hygiene services in recent years. In 2011, the Government launched a three-year pilot project to provide basic dental care services for elders residing in residential care homes or receiving services in day care centres through outreach dental teams set up by non-governmental organizations with government subsidies. The pilot project was converted into a regular programme in October 2014 with the expanded scope of treatments to cover fillings, extractions, dentures, etc. and the expanded pool of beneficiaries to cover elders in similar facilities.

7. In addition, the Community Care Fund (“CCF”) launched the Elderly Dental Assistance Programme in 2012 to provide free removable dentures and related dental services for eligible elders who are users of the home care service or home help service schemes subvented by the Social Welfare Department. To benefit more elders who have financial difficulties and do not receive Comprehensive Social Security Assistance, the CCF has expanded the programme from September 2015 to cover elders who are Old Age Living Allowance recipients by phases, starting with those aged 80 or above in the first phase involving some 130 000 elders. The CCF will consider expanding the target beneficiaries to other age groups progressively having regard to the progress of implementation and overall manpower situation in the dental profession.

8. We believe that the above new measures could deploy the dentistry services in the community to provide appropriate dental care services to the elderly in need in a more effective and flexible way. Therefore, the Government currently has no plan to solicit help from private dentists to provide dental services for the needy elderly at elderly health centres and government dental clinics outside the normal operating hours. We will continue our publicity and education efforts to improve the oral health of the public.

9. The Government will provide the report of the strategic review on healthcare manpower planning and professional development in Hong Kong in due course.

Yours sincerely,



(Miss Yvonne Tam)

for Secretary for Food and Health

c.c.

Director of Health (Attn: Ms Sharon Lee)

Secretary for Civil Service (Attn: Ms Emily Ng)