

**Public Accounts Committee  
16th December 2014**

**Director of Audit Report No. 63 (Chapter 2)  
Provision of Health Services for the Elderly**

**Remarks by Chief Executive, Hospital Authority**

**Chairman, Members,**

In relation to the recommendations made in the Audit Commission (Audit) report on the Provision of Health Services for the Elderly by the Hospital Authority (HA), I would like to state below HA's responses and improvement measures.

2. HA is committed to providing quality health services to the people of Hong Kong (including the elderly). We understand the concerns of Audit and the public on the waiting time at the specialist outpatient clinics (SOPCs). In the light of the audit recommendations, HA will consider taking further measures to improve the waiting time at our SOPCs.

**Specialist Outpatient Service Waiting Time Management**

3. First, HA will continue to implement and enhance various measures to improve the waiting time at SOPCs, including -

- Enhancing Public Primary Care Service – HA has all along been committed to enhancing public primary care services. Patients with stable and less complex conditions can be treated at the Family Medicine and general outpatient clinics, thereby alleviating the pressure of SOPCs;
- Enhancing Manpower – HA has enhanced the manpower at SOPCs through the employment of part time doctors. Some hospital clusters have also adopted special honorarium as a temporary measure to further increase its SOPC capacity; and

- Public-Private Partnership (PPP) – HA will explore the possibility of launching PPP projects on SOPC services for those specialties with higher demand but of a non-acute nature, especially when there is manpower shortage in the public sector.

### **Specialist Outpatient Clinics Waiting Time Information**

4. With a view to enhancing transparency, HA has uploaded the SOPC waiting time for five of the eight major specialties on HA's website. HA plans to upload the SOPC waiting time for the remaining three major specialties in 2015. Moreover, HA will display comprehensive, consistent and update-to-date waiting time information in SOPCs to facilitate patients' understanding of the waiting time situation in HA and their making of informed decisions in treatment choices and plans.

### **Piloting Cross-cluster Referral Arrangement**

5. Since 2012, HA has piloted a cross-cluster referral arrangement to address SOPC waiting time disparity among clusters. According to the arrangement, suitable patients triaged under the routine category are given options to receive SOPC consultation at clusters with shorter waiting time. There are currently three specialties adopting the cross-cluster referral arrangement, namely Ear, Nose and Throat; Gynaecology and Ophthalmology. Patients joined this arrangement with various reasons, including the convenience of traveling across clusters, degree of waiting time disparity and personal preference. HA will consider extending the cross-cluster referral arrangement to other specialties when appropriate.

### **Booking Arrangement of SOPC Appointment**

6. In order to provide service to more patients in SOPCs, when setting the number of SOP sessions available for booking, HA will make reference to previous utilization data, seasonal demand and manpower situation. HA adopts an over-booking mechanism which help filling up the cancelled and defaulted appointments so as to fully utilize the service capacity. HA will improve and coordinate the appointment scheduling of SOPC cases and enhance the booking arrangement.

## **Community Geriatric Assessment Service (CGAS)**

7. HA has in recent years extended the Community Geriatric Assessment Service (CGAS) to cover more Residential Care Homes for the Elderly (RCHEs). As of March 2014, HA has provided CGAS to 638 (around 89%) RCHEs in Hong Kong. HA will continue to review its service model and provision as appropriate with a view to maintaining and enhancing the quality of healthcare services for elderly residing in RCHEs, including the provision of CGAS to more RCHEs as appropriate.

## **Conclusion**

8. In all, HA appreciates the effort of Audit in conducting a thorough review on the provision of elderly services. HA has accepted and will follow up with Audit's recommendations to further improve its elderly healthcare services.