

**For discussion on
12 February 2018**

Legislative Council Panel on Health Services

Development of Primary Healthcare Services

PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members on the development of the primary healthcare services in the public sector as well as the latest progress in the setting up of the pilot District Health Centre in Kwai Tsing District.

BACKGROUND

2. Hong Kong has a twin-track healthcare system, with the public sector being the cornerstone providing the safety net for all. Hong Kong's healthcare system, similar to those in many other developed countries, is facing major challenges brought about by a rapidly ageing population and the associated increasing prevalence of chronic diseases. The Government is determined to step up efforts to promote individual and community involvement, enhance co-ordination among various medical and social sectors, and strengthen district-level primary healthcare services. Through these measures, we aim to encourage the public to take precautionary measures against diseases, enhance their capability in self-care and home care, and reduce the demand for hospitalisation. A comprehensive and co-ordinated primary healthcare system will enhance overall public health and reduce avoidable use of hospital services.

3. The Government has taken various steps to promote primary healthcare development over the years. In 1990, the Working Party on Primary Health Care Report published a report entitled "Health for All – The Way Ahead" which reviewed the primary care system in Hong Kong. Its recommendations guided the primary healthcare policy in the past few decades.

4. In 2008, the Government published the Healthcare Reform Consultation Document "Your Health, Your Life" setting out a

comprehensive package of proposals for reforming the healthcare system, including enhancing primary care development especially the provision of continuing, preventive, comprehensive and holistic healthcare services.

5. In 2010, the Food and Health Bureau (FHB) published the “Primary Care Development in Hong Kong: Strategy Document”, setting out the major strategies and pathways of action for improving the delivery of primary care services in Hong Kong. The Primary Care Office was established in the same year under the Department of Health (DH) to co-ordinate public and private healthcare providers and other stakeholders in the implementation of population-wide policies and strategies to enhance primary care.

PRIMARY HEALTHCARE SERVICES

6. Primary healthcare services in Hong Kong are mainly provided by DH and Hospital Authority (HA) in the public sector and by family doctors in the private sector.

Department of Health

7. DH is the Government’s health adviser and agency to execute healthcare policies and statutory functions. It safeguards the community’s health through a range of promotional, preventive, curative and rehabilitative services. Primary care is being delivered through DH’s various areas of work with emphasis on preventive care. Key service areas of DH are listed at **Annex A**.

8. Under the area of health promotion, activities are targeted at both the population at large and specific groups. While the Central Health Education Unit is the key service unit delivering health promotion, other DH units (such as the Special Preventive Programme for AIDS counselling and education, the Oral Health Education Unit for dental health promotion) also deliver programmes to address specific health issues.

9. Under the area of disease prevention and control, service units such as Family Health Service, Student Health Service, Elderly Health Service, Clinical Genetic Service and School Dental Care Service

specifically provide preventive care to individuals of specific age groups. The scope of services covers a wide range such as immunisation, screening of congenital diseases (e.g. congenital hypothyroidism), growth monitoring and developmental assessment, and health assessment for population groups including children, primary and secondary school students, women, elderly; and dental check-up for school children. Preventive services also cover the stage before a child is born, including ante/postnatal care and family planning service for child bearing age women, and counselling for genetic diseases. The Centre for Health Protection has an important role in the prevention and control of both communicable and non-communicable diseases, which is executed through surveillance, outbreak management, health promotion, risk communication, emergency preparedness and contingency planning, infection control, laboratory services, specialised treatment and care services, as well as training and research.

10. Apart from these centre-based services, DH also runs disease prevention programmes, including programmes for vaccination (such as the Government Vaccination Programme and the Residential Care Home Vaccination Programme that provide seasonal influenza vaccination and pneumococcal vaccination for elderly living in the community and residential care homes), cancer screening (such as cervical and colorectal cancer screening programmes) and smoking cessation.

11. Under the area of curative care and rehabilitation, the specialized services of Tuberculosis and Chest, Social Hygiene Service and Special Preventive Programme provide curative care as well as health promotion for the prevention and management of tuberculosis and respiratory diseases, sexually transmitted diseases, viral hepatitis and HIV/AIDS. The Child Assessment Service provides assessment and intervention prescription to enable children to overcome developmental problems.

12. In 2009, the Government launched the Elderly Health Care Voucher (EHV) Pilot Scheme to subsidise Hong Kong elders aged 70 or above to use primary care services provided by the private sector. The scheme was converted from a pilot project into a recurrent programme in 2014. Since the implementation of the EHV Scheme, we have introduced various enhancement measures, including increasing the

annual voucher amount progressively from the initial sum of \$250 to \$2,000 over the years, and revising the financial cap to \$4,000. The face value of each voucher was changed from \$50 to \$1 in 2014 to make it more convenient for the elders to use the vouchers. Moreover, the eligibility age for the EHV Scheme has been lowered from 70 to 65 since 1 July 2017. As of today, some 950 000 elders have made use of EHV.

13. The PCO plays an important role in supporting the development of primary care in Hong Kong and the implementation of primary care development strategies and actions. PCO has also drawn on appropriate professional advice on the development and promotion of primary care conceptual models, clinical reference frameworks for major diseases, and preventive reference frameworks for different age groups. It has been promoting primary care in the community. A list of the key achievements of PCO is at **Annex B**.

Hospital Authority

14. HA has also implemented a number of measures to step up primary healthcare services.

General Out-patient Services

15. The general out-patient services under HA are primarily used by the elderly, low-income groups and chronically ill patients. Patients under the care of the general out-patient clinics (GOPCs) comprise two major categories: chronically ill patients in stable medical condition, such as patients with diabetes mellitus or hypertension; and episodic disease patients with relatively mild symptoms, such as those suffering from influenza, cold or gastroenteritis.

16. At present, GOPCs under HA provide services for more than 1.5 million patients, of which one-third are elderly patients aged 65 or above. In 2016-17, the GOPCs served about six million attendances, and about 70% of the consultations were provided for the key service users (i.e. elderly patients aged 65 or above, chronically ill patients and Comprehensive Social Security Assistance recipients).

17. In view of the increasing service demand, HA has been striving to strengthen its general out-patient services. With the implementation of various measures, there has been an increase of a total of over 600 000 general out-patient attendances from 2012-13 to 2016-17, including

evening and public holiday clinic services. To tackle the demand for general out-patient services, HA also plans to increase gradually the GOPC consultation quota by more than 44 000 attendances in 2017-18 and 2018-19. It has also launched the GOPC Public-Private Partnership Programme in 2014, providing patients with hypertension and/or diabetes mellitus (with or without hyperlipidemia) and in stable clinical condition a choice to receive subsidized treatment provided by private doctors. The programme now covers 16 districts in Hong Kong and will be extended to two more districts in 2018-19.

Risk Factor Assessment and Management Programme and Nurse and Allied Health Clinics

18. To enhance chronic disease management in GOPCs, the HA has implemented various initiatives, such as the Risk Factor Assessment and Management Programme (RAMP) and Nurse and Allied Health Clinics (NAHC). Under RAMP, multidisciplinary teams have been set up at selected GOPCs of HA to provide targeted health risk assessment and management for diabetes mellitus and hypertension patients, so as to delay disease progression, prevent complications and improve quality of life for patients and carers. As for NAHCs comprising nurses and allied health professionals, the clinics have been established in selected GOPCs to provide more focused care for high-risk chronic disease patients. These services include fall prevention, handling of chronic respiratory problems, wound care, continence care, drug compliance and supporting mental wellness.

Patient Empowerment Programme

19. A patient empowerment programme, which is a public-private partnership programme, has been implemented in all clusters of HA in collaboration with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to improve chronic disease patients' knowledge of their diseases and enhance their self-management skills. The content of the empowerment sessions are designed by the selected NGO partners of the Programme. Suitable hypertensive and diabetic patients are referred by HA to attend the Programme.

Community Health Centres

20. To tie in with the government's primary care development strategy, HA has been actively planning for the development of Community Health Centres (CHCs) in various districts. With an aim to

providing integrated and comprehensive primary care services, the CHCs provide medical consultation, multidisciplinary services to complement doctors' management and control disease progression, and patient empowerment to promote self-care. The Tin Shui Wai (Tin Yip Road) CHC, North Lantau CHC and Kwun Tong CHC commenced services in 2012, 2013 and 2015 respectively.

21. In planning for the provision of public primary care services, the Government takes into account a number of factors, including primary care service delivery model, demographic changes, distribution of the target groups, the provision of primary care services in the district, etc. Having considered the distribution of the target groups and the future population growth in the districts, the Government plans to develop CHCs in Mong Kok, Shek Kip Mei and North District.

Community Nursing Services

22. Community Nursing Services (CNS) provides nursing care and treatment for patients in their own homes. Through home visits, Community Nurses (CN) administer proper nursing care to patients and, at the same time, imbue patients and their families with knowledge on health promotion and disease prevention. The ultimate goal of CNS is to provide continuous care for patients who are discharged from hospitals and allow patients to recover in their home environment. In 2016-17, 867 226 home visits were made by CN, and the proportion of home visits made for geriatric patients is around 84%.

LATEST DEVELOPMENT

23. In her 2017 Policy Address, the Chief Executive directed that, to further illustrate the effectiveness of medical-social collaboration, FHB should set up a District Health Centre (DHC) with a brand new operation mode in Kwai Tsing District within two years.

24. In this relation, the Government has established the Steering Committee on Primary Healthcare Development (Steering Committee) in November 2017, which comprises key persons/representatives from the medical and allied health professions (including family medicine, nursing, Chinese medicine, pharmacy, physiotherapy and occupational therapy), academia, NGOs, and district groups. The Steering Committee would formulate the development strategy and devise a blueprint for primary healthcare services. The Steering Committee will review the efficiency

and effectiveness of the software and hardware for the delivery of primary healthcare services; seek to enhance co-ordination among various medical and social sectors and public-private partnership; encourage the public to take precautionary measures against diseases, strengthen their capabilities in self-care and home care, raise their health awareness and promote health management. The Steering Committee will also exploit the use of big data to devise strategies which best fit the needs of the community with a view to enhancing primary healthcare services at the district level.

25. On the other hand, the Government established the Working Group on District Health Centre Pilot Project in Kwai Tsing District (Working Group), which comprises medical and healthcare professionals, district representatives, academia, to provide advice on the planning, implementation and evaluation of the DHC pilot project.

26. Subject to the deliberation of the Steering Committee and the Working Group, we will work out the detailed service model and scope of the DHC, and draw up plans to gauge views from key stakeholders in Kwai Tsing and relevant health professionals.

ADVICE SOUGHT

27. Members are invited to note the latest development in public primary healthcare services.

**Food and Health Bureau
Department of Health
Hospital Authority
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Key service areas of the Department of Health

(a) Health promotion

- Central Health Education Unit
- Oral Health Education Unit
- Special Preventive Programme
- Adolescent Health Programme

(b) Disease prevention and control

- Centre for Health Protection
- Family Health Service
- Student Health Service
- School Dental Care Service
- Elderly Health Service
- Clinical Genetic Service

(c) Curative care and rehabilitation

- Tuberculosis and Chest Service
- Social Hygiene Service
- Special Preventive Programme
- Child Assessment Service

(d) Health protection through statutory intervention

- Office for Regulation of Private Healthcare Facilities
- Tobacco Control Office
- Drug Office
- Medical Device Control Office
- Chinese Medicine Division
- Port Health Office
- Forensic Pathology Service
- Radiation Health Unit
- Boards and Councils (of healthcare professionals)

Key achievements of PCO

Reference frameworks

The reference frameworks provide common reference to healthcare professionals for the provision of continuing, comprehensive and evidence-based care in the community, empower patients and their carers, and raise public awareness on the importance of proper prevention and management of chronic diseases. The following four reference frameworks have been published with modules under which to elaborate on various aspects of preventive care and disease management–

- (a) Hong Kong Reference Framework for Diabetes Care in Adults in Primary Care Settings (with 12 modules)
- (b) Hong Kong Reference Framework for Hypertension Care in Adults in Primary Care Settings (with 10 modules)
- (c) Hong Kong Reference Framework for Preventive Care for Children in Primary Care Settings (with 2 modules)
- (d) Hong Kong Reference Framework for Preventive Care for Older Adults in Primary Care Settings (with 5 modules)

2. The reference frameworks are being reviewed and updated regularly in accordance with latest scientific evidence, and training activities have been organised to promulgate the use of reference frameworks among primary care doctors.

Primary Care Directory

3. The Primary Care Directory, a web-based database providing personal and practice-based information of primary care professionals, was launched in April 2011. As of end-December 2017, 1 705 doctors, 426 dentists and 1 868 Chinese medicine practitioners had enrolled. The mobile website of the Directory has also been made available since February 2016. To facilitate primary care practitioners in referring their patients to receive community services, PCO launched problem-based web pages for users of the Directory in November 2016. PCO will continue to maintain the Directory and promote its use via mass transport media and the internet during major festive periods, as well as posters and leaflets placed at Accident & Emergency Departments of all public hospitals.

Promotion of primary care and family doctor concept

4. To promote primary care and the family doctor concept, various publicity activities were conducted, such as:

- (a) PCO collaborated with Radio Television Hong Kong in the production and broadcast of two series of television drama “My Family Doctor” in 2014 and 2016. The programme highlights the important roles of family doctors and primary care in daily life. Another new series are under planning.
- (b) To echo the World Family Doctor Day, PCO has been collaborating with the Hong Kong College of Family Physicians in organizing publicity events and activities. Radio and Facebook live interviews were conducted. Health articles were published in local newspapers. A short video featuring family physicians and key concepts of family medicine was also produced and promoted through mass media, Youtube and social media.
- (c) A new Announcement in the Public Interest (API) on family doctor was produced and has been broadcast on TV, as well as Youtube channel and social media since 1 January 2018.