



Panel on Welfare Services  
December 11, 2017

**Views on “Elderly Services Programme Plan” - Submission of Our Hong Kong Foundation**

Panel Members,

Thank you for this opportunity to make a few remarks on behalf of Our Hong Kong Foundation (OHKF).

OHKF is delighted to be a part of the Panel on Welfare Services’ discussion on the Elderly Services Programme Plan (ESPP). Promoting the use of technological innovation to cope with the challenges of our ageing population has been an important research focus of OHKF. In June 2017, OHKF, in partnership with the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, released the first landscape report on gerontechnology in Hong Kong (report can be downloaded from: [https://www.ourhkfoundation.org.hk/sites/default/files/media/pdf/healthtech\\_eng\\_cover\\_s.pdf](https://www.ourhkfoundation.org.hk/sites/default/files/media/pdf/healthtech_eng_cover_s.pdf)). Our report offers a comprehensive summary of the situation, available products, gaps and difficulties of the local gerontechnology industry. It provides valuable insight into the role of technology in promoting ageing in place through improving functional capacity and delaying institutionalization, thus improving the livelihood of our senior citizens.

Gerontechnology refers to technology directed towards elderly-related products and services. Much aligned with the ESPP that proposes exploration into a) the use of assistive technology for both elderly users and service providers to enhance the quality of life of the elderly and promote better health management (recommendation 18c); and b) making better use of technology to improve the effectiveness of service delivery (recommendation 12a), we recognize the potential benefit of gerontechnology for both elderly users and their caregivers. In our landscape report, a total of 72 innovative products were studied, spanning across four major areas including living, healthcare, diet and transport that together, contribute to the overall wellbeing of any individual. We suggest that the utilization of gerontechnology, ranging from simple monitoring devices to sophisticated robots, may slow down the functional decline of our senior citizens and hence, promote healthy and active ageing together with improved quality of life. Our report also highlighted the potential for such assistive health technologies to facilitate caregivers in providing care and increase service delivery efficiency, hence alleviating labour pressure on institutional caregivers of the ageing population as well as public resources. We believe that integrating technology into the elderly care system should be viewed as an investment rather than an expense. The application of gerontechnology is expected to reduce government expenditure in the long run



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by transforming Hong Kong into a technologically advanced city which improves the livelihood of our senior citizens and promotes ageing in place.

With improved financial capacity and higher educational attainment, future seniors are likely to seek higher quality of living with more independence and autonomy and we anticipate a significant market potential for gerontechnology. At the same time, we recognize that the current ecosystem for gerontechnology and elderly care products in Hong Kong is at a more initial stage than other economies. In light of this, our report identified a total of 24 gaps and difficulties faced by different stakeholders at different product development stages in the local gerontechnology ecosystem. The key gaps include: (1) society's lack of awareness in gerontechnology; (2) insufficient collaboration among stakeholders; (3) startups failing to prototype or commercialize their products due to the lack of funding; (4) cultural differences and difficulties in product localization; and (5) lack of testing ground for new products. For example, we recognized that insufficient medical-social collaboration led to failure in adopting the Automatic Tablet Dispensing Machine at residential homes. We see that the potential of the local gerontechnology market has yet to be fully realized and we believe that identified difficulties should be addressed to grasp the significant opportunities presented by gerontechnology.

We hope that our report will galvanize policy makers, health professionals, companies, investors, NGOs and other stakeholders to work together to address the difficulties faced by the local gerontechnology sector. We believe that the stimulation of cross-sector collaboration and support from the government in addressing these gaps and difficulties will create a better future for our senior citizens and their caregivers in Hong Kong. We perceive gerontechnology as important in turning challenges of ageing into opportunities, and ultimately, transforming Hong Kong into an age-enabling city that successfully allows ageing in place.

Thank you again for your time and we look forward to further discuss.

Sincerely,

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