



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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電話號碼 Tel. No.: 3509 8958

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傳真號碼 Fax No.: 2102 2433

7 April 2020

Ms Anita SIT
Clerk to Finance Committee
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central

Dear Ms Sit,

Legislative Council Finance Committee
Healthcare funding and support for the medical sector

Regarding the letter from Dr Hon Pierre CHAN on 20 February 2020 concerning healthcare funding and support for the medical sector, our reply is as follows.

(1) Anti-epidemic Fund

2. Public hospitals are one of our main lines of defence in Hong Kong's anti-epidemic efforts. With the development of Coronavirus Disease 2019 ("COVID-19") in Hong Kong, our frontline healthcare workers are facing additional workload and pressure. The Government would allocate \$4.7 billion to the Hospital Authority ("HA") from the Anti-epidemic Fund to provide additional resources for the HA in tackling the disease, in particular for ensuring sufficient support and protection for frontline healthcare staff. The HA would utilise the funding in different aspects of the anti-epidemic work, including –

- (i) personnel-related expenditure for frontline staff involved in anti-epidemic efforts and expenditure on Special Honorarium Scheme ("SHS");
- (ii) procuring additional personal protective equipment and other necessary accessories for healthcare staff;

香港添馬添美道 2 號政府總部東翼 17-19 樓 電話：(852) 3509 8765 傳真：(852) 2541 3352

- (iii) providing staff performing duties in high risk areas under the Emergency Response Level with temporary accommodation and Special Rental Allowance;
- (iv) enhancing support for laboratory testing and procuring drug and medical equipment; and
- (v) additional support services, including cleansing, transportation and hospital supplies, etc.

3. On 24 February, the HA has announced a special allowance arrangement to provide staff engaging in high risk duties under the Emergency Response Level with Special Emergency Response Allowance as a token of appreciation and recognition. The allowance is provided with retrospective effect from 25 January and will be applicable until the lowering of the Emergency Response Level. The HA will use and deploy the resources flexibly having regard to the development of the situation, so as to provide the best support to frontline healthcare staff.

(2) Support for private practitioners and dentists

4. In addition to the public healthcare system, the private healthcare sector also plays an important role in tackling the epidemic. The Secretary for Food and Health met with Dr Hon Pierre Chan and representatives of the private healthcare sector to understand their needs on 4 March. The Food and Health Bureau would continue to maintain close liaison with the sector and provide appropriate assistance to them.

(3) Expenditure of the HA on winter surge

5. In response to the service demand surge, the Government allocated an additional provision of \$500 million in January 2018 to the HA for implementation of response plan for winter surge in 2017-18 and various additional measures with a view to relieving the manpower situation. The response plan for 2017-18 winter surge included the following measures –

- (i) providing additional beds;
- (ii) enhancing virology services to facilitate and expedite patient management decision;
- (iii) enhancing ward rounds of senior clinicians and related supporting services in the evenings, at weekends and on public holidays so as to facilitate early discharge of patients;
- (iv) enhancing support to the discharge and transfer of patients, such as non-emergency ambulance transfer service, pharmacy, and portering services;
- (v) increasing the service quotas of general outpatient clinics; and

(vi) enhancing geriatrics support to Accident and Emergency departments.

6. Besides, with the additional \$500 million allocation from the Government, the HA implemented additional measures including –

- (i) extending the use of SHS to provide extra manpower of clerical and supporting staff to support healthcare staff so that the latter could focus more on clinical work;
- (ii) further relaxing and streamlining the approval for the SHS arrangement to a minimum operation need of one hour to cover all grades of staff to meet increasing needs for greater flexibility in the use of SHS under exceptional circumstances;
- (iii) providing SHS jobs at Advanced Practice Nurse level to work on night-shift duties at both acute general, convalescent and rehabilitation wards/services to enhance senior coverage and supervision to ward staff;
- (iv) relaxing the criteria for the implementation of the Continuous Night Shift Scheme (“CNSS”) by suspending the required night shift frequency for triggering the CNSS with a view to increasing flexibility in manpower deployment; and
- (v) increasing the rate of SHS allowance by 10% under a special one-off arrangement to encourage more staff to work during the surge period with significant increase in workload anticipated.

7. The HA’s total expenditure for implementing the above response plan and additional measures was \$649 million, part of which was met by fully utilising the additional \$500 million allocation from the Government while the remaining \$149 million was covered by the HA’s own resources. Breakdown of the relevant expenditure is set out in the table below –

	Expenditure (\$ million)
Personal Emoluments	
Doctor	64
Nurse	244
Allied Health Professional	21
Supporting Staff	75
Sub-total	404
Other charges	245 ¹
Total	649

¹ Including around \$60 million as the expenditure for engaging agency staff.

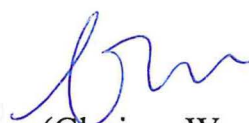
(4) Information dissemination by the Centre for Health Protection (“CHP”)

8. The CHP of the Department of Health provides updates on the latest situation of COVID-19 in Hong Kong, the Mainland and other countries/areas on a daily basis through a thematic website. Details of all local confirmed and probable cases (including date of onset, hospital admitted, whether it is a local or an imported case) are set out in the note on “Latest situation of cases of COVID-19” (https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/local_situation_covid19_en.pdf) on the thematic website.

9. Since January, the daily number of new cases in the Mainland and overseas countries/areas is available in the note on “Countries/areas with reported cases of COVID-19” (https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/statistics_of_the_cases_novel_coronavirus_infection_en.pdf) on the thematic website.

10. Besides, past data have also been uploaded onto the website of “DATA.GOV.HK” (<https://data.gov.hk/en-data/dataset/hk-dh-chpsebceddr-novel-infectious-agent>). The CHP will continue to monitor the development of the epidemic situation and maintain transparency in dissemination of information.

Yours sincerely



(Clarissa Wan)

for Secretary for Food and Health

c.c. Chief Executive, Hospital Authority
(Attn.: Ms Dorothy Lam)