

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

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**Panel on Health Services**

**Minutes of special meeting  
held on Wednesday, 16 December 2020, at 9:00 am  
in Conference Room 2 of the Legislative Council Complex**

- Members present** :
- Hon Elizabeth QUAT, BBS, JP (Chairman)
  - Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, GBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)
  - Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, GBS, JP
  - Hon WONG Ting-kwong, GBS, JP
  - Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, SBS, JP
  - Hon CHAN Hak-kan, BBS, JP
  - Hon CHAN Kin-por, GBS, JP
  - Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, SBS, JP
  - Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-yea, GBS, JP
  - Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP
  - Hon YIU Si-wing, BBS
  - Hon CHAN Han-pan, BBS, JP
  - Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, SBS, MH, JP
  - Hon Alice MAK Mei-kuen, BBS, JP
  - Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH
  - Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, SBS, JP
  - Hon SHIU Ka-fai, JP
  - Hon Wilson OR Chong-shing, MH
  - Dr Hon Pierre CHAN
  - Dr Hon CHENG Chung-tai
- Members attending** :
- Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, GBS, JP
  - Hon Holden CHOW Ho-ding
  - Hon YUNG Hoi-yan, JP
  - Hon LAU Kwok-fan, MH

**Public Officers :  
attending**

Item I

Prof Sophia CHAN Siu-chee, JP  
Secretary for Food and Health

Ms Joan HUNG  
Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Health)6  
Food and Health Bureau

Dr WONG Ka-hing, JP  
Controller, Centre for Health Protection  
Department of Health

Dr Vivien CHUANG  
Chief Manager (Infection, Emergency & Contingency)  
Hospital Authority

Dr Benjamin LEE  
Deputising Chief Pharmacist  
Hospital Authority

Prof David HUI Shu-cheong, BBS  
Chairman, Department of Medicine and Therapeutics  
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

**Clerk in  
attendance**

: Ms Maisie LAM  
Chief Council Secretary (2) 5

**Staff in  
attendance**

: Miss Kay CHU  
Senior Council Secretary (2) 5

Mr Ronald LAU  
Council Secretary (2) 5

Miss Maggie CHIU  
Legislative Assistant (2) 5

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**I. Procurement and administration of coronavirus disease 2019 vaccines and other anti-epidemic measures**

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)380/20-21(01), CB(2)453/20-21(01) to (02) and CB(2)522/20-21(01) to (03)]

At the invitation of the Chairman, Secretary for Food and Health ("SFH") briefed members on the Administration's overall efforts and corresponding measures to combat coronavirus disease 2019 ("COVID-19"), including the procurement and preparation for administration of vaccines.

2. Dr Pierre CHAN urged the Administration to provide written responses to his earlier letters on issues relating to the epidemic as soon as possible.

Preventing the importation of cases

3. Holding the view that the four waves of local epidemic were mainly caused by imported cases, Dr Pierre CHAN urged the Administration to take measures to completely plug the loopholes in the cross-boundary epidemic control measures to squarely address the problem. SFH advised that in view of the development of the epidemic and the approaching of the winter influenza season, the Administration had further tightened various anti-epidemic measures, including, among others, the circuit breaker mechanism of passenger flights, the Designated Quarantine Hotel ("DQH") Scheme and specimen collection arrangement for passengers from places outside China, under the approach of "preventing the importation of cases and the spreading of virus in the community".

4. Pointing out that 36 hotels had been selected to provide service under the DQH Scheme, Mr YIU Si-wing queried about under what circumstances the Administration would recruit additional hotels for the purpose given that many non-designated hotels were actually serving guests under quarantine. Mr Michael TIEN was concerned that while the DQH Scheme would be fully implemented with effect from 22 December 2020, some hotels under the Scheme would operate as DQHs starting from 18 December 2020. SFH advised that the Administration would keep in view the implementation of the DQH Scheme, which would provide a total supply of 12 000 DQH rooms by 36 designated hotels, and would consider enhancing the provision as and when necessary.

5. Mr Holden CHOW held the view that the carrying out of strict enforcement actions against any violations of compulsory quarantine regulation was crucial to prevent the importation of cases. SFH advised that under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F), hotels and guesthouses

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were subject to restrictions on gathering activities and infection control requirements. A case in point was that hotel operators had to take reasonable steps to ensure that persons under quarantine in their premises could not receive any visitors into their guest rooms during the quarantine period. The Administration would continue to strengthen inspection and enforcement actions in this regard.

Preventing the virus spreading in the community

6. Noting the possible influx of COVID-19 cases from overseas countries and the recent local outbreaks in individual estates, Dr Priscilla LEUNG urged the Administration to make references to its own experience gained in the past year and the success of the Mainland in fighting COVID-19 to enhance the anti-epidemic policy and measures to timely and effectively prevent the spreading of the virus in the community. Expressing concern that there were media reports of suspected non-compliance with the social distancing measures which might have contributed to the arrival of the fourth wave of the epidemic, Dr Pierre CHAN queried about the enforcement situation in this regard. Mr SHIU Ka-fai said that there might be cases in which the infected provided false information which rendered the source of infection not traceable. Alleging that there were violations of social distancing and mask wearing requirements in Tuen Mun, Mr Michael TIEN urged the relevant Government departments and the Police to strengthen enforcement actions in this regard. Mr YIU Si-wing cautioned that gatherings of some foreign domestic helpers ("FDHs") in non-licensed guesthouses on their rest days might increase the risk of transmission. The Chairman was worried that Hong Kong people and FDHs' might gather more frequently during the upcoming Christmas holiday and as a result, would pose a high risk of community infection.

7. SFH advised that the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Police conducted joint operations to strictly enforce the requirements under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G) and the Prevention and Control of Disease (Wearing of Mask) Regulation (Cap. 599I). So far, about 100 fixed penalty notices had been given out in tandem with an increase in the penalty level from \$2,000 to \$5,000 to enhance the deterrent effect. Enforcement actions would continue to be strengthened. In response to Dr Pierre CHAN's concern that there were illegal immigrants with COVID-19 engaging in illegal activities in the community, which might exacerbate the risk of virus transmission, Controller, Centre for Health Protection said that assistance from the Police would be sought as and when necessary for contact tracing.

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8. While supporting the provision of Anti-epidemic Fund for those in need, Dr Priscilla LEUNG called on the Administration to accord priority to curbing the epidemic to address the root of the problem. Mr SHIU Ka-fai urged the Administration to provide further support to beauty parlours, massage establishments and catering business which had been seriously affected by the implementation of various anti-epidemic requirements and the fluctuating epidemic situation. SFH explained that further tightening of the social distancing measures, including closing certain scheduled premises under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation, aimed to minimize the chance of transmission of the virus in the community in order to contain the fourth wave of the epidemic.

9. While recognizing the efforts made by the Administration and health experts in the past year to fight COVID-19, Mr CHAN Kin-por was worried about the development of the fourth wave of the epidemic. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung said that stringent and decisive measures should be taken to combat the epidemic. Mrs Regina IP expressed regret over the Administration's failure to curb the epidemic for a year. Observing that the age of critically ill and deceased COVID-19 patients dropping, Mr POON Siu-ping was concerned about whether new coronavirus variants involved in the fourth wave of the epidemic. Affirming that the COVID-19 virus in the third and fourth waves of the epidemic was high in transmissibility, Chairman of the Department of Medicine and Therapeutics, The Chinese University of Hong Kong advised that the major cause of those cases was delayed admission to hospital.

COVID-19 virus testing

10. Noting with grave concern about the existence of many silent transmission chains in the community, Ms Alice MAK urged the Administration to implement a new round of compulsory universal testing to achieve "zero infection". Dr Priscilla LEUNG opined that the implementation of compulsory universal testing could satisfy the proportionality test laid down in the case of *Hysan Development Co Ltd v Town Planning Board* [2016] 19 HKCFAR 372 under the common law. Dr CHENG Chung-tai considered compulsory universal testing ineffective. Mr CHAN Han-pan said that the key to achieve "zero infection" was to implement the universal testing together with the introduction of "Health Code". Considering that more preventive measures should be taken to curb the epidemic, Ms Starry LEE requested the Administration to explain the reasons if it decided not to implement the second round of the compulsory universal testing, which, to her understanding, were generally supported by

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the community. The Chairman, Mrs Regina IP and Ms YUNG Hoi-yan made a similar request.

11. SFH and Chairman of the Department of Medicine and Therapeutics, The Chinese University of Hong Kong advised that an effective implementation of a compulsory universal testing had to be complemented by comprehensive lockdown for a few weeks. After having taken into account the local situation, the present precision-guided anti-epidemic measures, which focused primarily on compulsory testing for people of high-risk groups, complemented by broadened and more convenient voluntary testing for the public constituted a more appropriate strategy. SFH further assured members that the Administration would continue to suitably adjust and strengthen the preparedness and response measures, which were equally important, to fight COVID-19. Consideration might be given to providing testing services with a larger coverage if warranted.

12. Expressing concern about the inadequacies in the provision of COVID-19 virus testing, Mr Wilson OR opined that the Administration should improve the coordination work in tackling small-scale outbreaks in the community. Ms Alice MAK urged the Administration to shorten the turnaround time for testing to less than 24 hours and ensure sufficient supply of specimen bottles to avoid hindering members of the public, in particular those living in premises with epidemic outbreaks, to undergo testing on a voluntary basis. Ms Starry LEE expressed similar views. Mr Michael TIEN said that assistance might be sought to make available the testing results within 24 hours, and notifications of positive or negative results should be provided as soon as possible.

13. SFH assured members that efforts had been and would continue to be made by the Administration to take prompt actions against any community outbreaks. A case in point was that in addition to 19 community testing centres in the territory, a number of mobile specimen collection stations and specimen bottle distribution points had been set up in districts with a number of confirmed COVID-19 cases to provide free testing services. At present, the maximum daily testing capacity of public and private laboratories was approximately 100 000 tests per day (without sample pooling), and a total of over 940 000 tests had been conducted with 0.19% COVID-19 cases identified during the period from 15 November to 15 December 2020. Referring to those cases in which the testing service provider delayed in sending out SMS message of negative results, she assured members that the problem had been addressed and the incident did not compromise the objective of identifying and treating confirmed cases promptly.

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Procurement and preparation for administration of vaccines

14. Mr LAU Kwok-fan was concerned about the priority groups for receiving COVID-19 vaccines and the Administration's timetable for the provision of the vaccines for the entire Hong Kong population. Mr POON Siu-ping raised a similar concern. Mr Wilson OR urged the Administration to publicly announce more information on the delivery schedule and administration of vaccines. In his view, priority should be accorded to frontline cleansing or security workers to receive vaccination. The Chairman urged for an early announcement of information on priority groups for vaccination, which, in her view, should cover frontline workers and FDHs. Mr CHAN Kin-por said that teachers and students should also be included in the priority groups for an early resumption of face-to-face classes in schools. Mr Holden CHOW relayed some parents' view that schools should take into account, among other factors, the suspension of face-to-face classes when making any arrangements for examinations in the near future. Ms YUNG Hoi-yan and Mr Holden CHOW requested the Administration to announce the vaccination arrangements without further delay to facilitate the implementation.

15. SFH advised that the vaccines would arrive Hong Kong in batches. The first batch of one million doses of the vaccine developed from the inactivated virus technology platform and the first batch of one million doses of the vaccine developed from the mRNA technology platform would be respectively delivered to Hong Kong in January 2021 and in the first quarter of 2021 the earliest. The priority groups to receive vaccination first included groups which had higher risks of coming into contact with the COVID-19 virus (e.g. healthcare workers), groups which had greater mortality rates after contracting the disease (e.g. the elderly, chronic patients), and/or groups which might easily transmit the virus to the vulnerable or weak if infected (e.g. staff of residential care homes). These groups of persons accounted for about 39% of the Hong Kong population. The target of the Administration was to provide vaccines for the majority of the Hong Kong population within 2021. In determining the scope of priority groups for vaccination, the Administration would continue to make reference to the views of the relevant Scientific Committees and the expert advisory group as well as the related policy bureaux. At present, cleansing workers, security workers and FDHs were not categorized as priority groups. That said, testing was currently arranged on a continuous basis based on risk assessment for targeted groups including, among others, school teachers and designated frontline workers. Public announcement in relation to vaccination arrangements would be made as and when appropriate.

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16. Referring to the estimation of an academic study that about 70% of Hong Kong people might adopt a wait-and-see attitude against COVID-19 vaccination, Ms Alice MAK queried about how the Administration would enhance the vaccination rate as well as the time and the ratio of population required to build up the herd immunity barrier for Hong Kong. To encourage more people to get vaccinated, Mr YIU Si-wing proposed that Hong Kong people should be allowed to choose from the available types of the COVID-19 vaccines for administration when there were sufficient supplies for the entire Hong Kong population. Mr CHAN Kin-por made a similar suggestion as, to his understanding, many people intended to opt for vaccine which was developed and produced in the Mainland. He further proposed providing allowance for fully vaccinated persons as a recognition and not subjecting them to certain social distancing measures to boost the uptake rate. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung suggested pitching such allowance at \$5,000. Dr CHENG Chung-tai was of the view that members of the public who wished to get vaccinated should have the freedom to choose the type of COVID-19 vaccines. The Chairman said that in addition to providing choices of vaccines, the Administration should step up public education to increase the uptake rate. Dr Priscilla LEUNG queried about the detailed arrangement for the provision of vaccination through private clinics.

17. SFH advised that on the premise that the COVID-19 vaccines to be delivered to Hong Kong were for emergency use in accordance with the emergency legislation, arrangements for vaccination would be worked out taking into account various factors, including, among others, the delivery schedule and logistical requirements of individual vaccines. It should be noted that Community Vaccination Centres would be set up and public education through different channels would be stepped up to promote vaccination. It was also planned that vaccination record could be uploaded to the Electronic Health Record Sharing System. In response to Mr Wilson OR's concern, SFH assured members that the Administration would continue to make prompt clarifications to the public against any fake news and rumors relating to the disease and vaccination.

18. Dr CHENG Chung-tai asked the Administration to make a pledge to arrange all Principal Officials to take the lead to receive COVID-19 vaccination to enhance public confidence in the safety of the vaccines and facilitate members of the public to make an informed decision. Stressing that Principal Officials would be invited to receive COVID-19 vaccination, SFH reiterated that the Administration would step up public education and enhance the transparency of vaccine-related information to build public confidence and encourage more members of the public to get vaccinated on a voluntary basis.



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19. Mr POON Siu-ping queried about the work progress of the emergency legislation. Mr LEUNG Chi-cheung urged the Administration to expedite its work in this regard. SFH assured members that the Administration had commenced working on relevant emergency legislation. In response to Mr SHIU Ka-fai's query about whether non-registered COVID-19 vaccines could be imported for personal use, SFH replied in the negative.

20. Pointing out that the United Kingdom Government granted a pharmaceutical company civil legal indemnity for COVID-19 vaccine, Dr CHIANG Lai-wan expressed concern about safety and legal liability for the emergency use of COVID-19 vaccines in Hong Kong. Mr SHIU Ka-fai was concerned about the possible failure in the phase 3 clinical trial of the vaccines which had been scheduled to arrive in Hong Kong by batches. SFH advised that the Administration was reviewing international practices in the use of COVID-19 vaccines which were recently developed under the public health emergency situation. Separately, a mechanism would be put in place for the monitoring of any adverse events occurring to the recipients associated with the administration of COVID-19 vaccines which were authorized for emergency use.

21. In response to Dr CHIANG Lai-wan's query about the efficacy and age limitation for using the COVID-19 mRNA vaccine developed by Fosun Pharma in collaboration with the German drug manufacturer BioNTech against COVID-19 disease, Chairman of the Department of Medicine and Therapeutics, The Chinese University of Hong Kong advised that among the some 40 000 participants, who were 16 years and older, of the phase 3 clinical trial of the COVID-19 mRNA vaccine, 170 confirmed cases of COVID-19 were evaluated, with 162 observed in the placebo group versus eight in the vaccine group, corresponding to 95% vaccine efficacy. Data concerning vaccine efficacy in adolescents lower than 15 years of age would be gathered shortly. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan urged the Administration to ensure the safety and efficacy of the supply of COVID-19 vaccines. SFH replied in the affirmative.

22. Mr CHAN Han-pan urged the Administration to explore with the Mainland authorities the feasibility of exempting those Hong Kong people who had received COVID-19 vaccination from entry quarantine. The Chairman and Mr CHAN Kin-por opined that the uptake rate might be increased if fully vaccinated persons could be exempted from compulsory quarantine when entering the Mainland and other places. Mr Holden CHOW said that the Mainland to exempt fully vaccinated Hong Kong people from entry quarantine could be conducive to revive the Hong Kong economy.

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23. SFH advised that issues relating to the quarantine arrangements would be examined taking into account various factors, such as the development of the epidemic, views of the World Health Organization, international practices and scientific evidence. Concerted efforts had been and would continue to be made by the Governments of Guangdong Province and Hong Kong to combat the epidemic under the co-operation mechanism on joint prevention and control of COVID-19.

Conclusion

24. In concluding, the Chairman called on the Administration to take into account members' views when formulating and implementing anti-epidemic measures. These views included, among others, to widen the coverage of priority groups for vaccination to various types of frontline workers, publicly announce the vaccination arrangements as soon as possible, conduct a new round of universal testing to identify silent transmission chains, shorten the turnaround time for testing, strictly enforce anti-epidemic regulations, discuss with the Governments of the Mainland and other places on the arrangements for immigration clearance for the vaccinated, and step up public health education and make clarifications as and when necessary.

**II. Any other business**

25. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10:51 am.