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**H.K. Pharmaceutical Staff Assn.
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25th June, 1999.

Chairman,
LegCo Panel on Health Services,
Legislative Council

Dear Sir,

Views On Health Report by The Harvard Team

The publication of the Health Care Report by The Harvard Team has highlighted the need for the reform of Health Care Services in Hong Kong. We would like to submit our views regarding the subject, particularly on the dispensing service.

Current Dispensing Service

In hospitals under the Hospital Authority, dispensing service is carried out by dispensers under the supervision of pharmacists. The qualifications of these dispensers vary from holders of Certificate of Competency in dispensing issued by the former M & H Department, or Certificate in Dispensing Studies issued by the VTC, or Higher Diploma in Pharmaceutical Technology issued by the Technical Institute to holders of Pharmacy Degree. Dispensers working in dispensaries of Health Department carry out similar duties, but without the supervision of pharmacists, and possess similar qualifications as their counterparts. In the private sector, a registered pharmacist is required for each pharmacy to possess and sell poisons and Dangerous Drugs. Moreover, assistant in the pharmacy require no specific qualification. Persons working in private dispensaries which do not sell poisons and Dangerous Drugs require no specific qualification or formal training either.

Registration of Dispensing Personnel

Clearly the current situation of dispensing service is not satisfactory, especially in the private sector. In order to improve the quality of dispensing service, to monitor the performance and enforce the accountability of the dispensing personnel, a statutory body should be formed to require all dispensing personnel, both in public and private sectors, to possess an acceptable qualification in the trade for registration before practicing.

Coordination Between Different Health Care Structures

There is lack of coordination in the dispensing service between government clinics and HA hospitals. The sharing of computer information and facilities between

dispensaries of Department of Health and pharmacies of HA is minimal, if not impossible. A patient may attend both OPD clinic of DH and Specialist Clinic of HA. Medicines thus obtained from the two institutions may be duplicated or even contra-indicated themselves without the knowledge by the counterparts. The problem may be more complicated if the patient has also attended private doctors and the medicines prescribed are usually difficult to identify.

Standardization of Dispensing Service

The above problem may be eased by the standardization of dispensing service among government clinics, HA hospitals and private sectors. The standardization includes using and sharing of common computer information and software, using standard format of labeling and description on medicines, using standard dispensing procedures and dispensing service quality requirement. Thus the medical record of a particular patient can be kept track of by professional personnel and sharing of precious medical resources can be shared by professional in different sectors.

Conclusion

Reform of the Health Care Service in Hong Kong is a formidable project. However, we sincerely hope that following two points can be carefully considered and incorporated in the project:

1. **Requirement of registration of all dispensing personnel in both the public and private sectors**

The requirement for registration of dispensing personnel in different sectors may be different depending on the actual situation. But the principle is to set up a reasonable standard to protect the health of patients as well as to maintain an acceptable level of dispensing service to the public;

2. **Standardization of dispensing service in both the public and private sector**

Obviously, there is compartmentalisation of the primary, the secondary as well as the tertiary health care structures in Hong Kong. It will be more economical and cost effective if different level of health care structures can be interfaced or coordinated smoothly. The standardization of dispensing service may be a first step towards the goal.

Yours faithfully,

(POON Po-fun)

for Chairman

Hong Kong Pharmaceutical Staff Association