

Letterhead of The Hong Kong Association of The Pharmaceutical Industry

A Reform Vision on Quality Health Care for Hong Kong People

A statement of the research-based pharmaceutical industry to build an efficient and effective health care system by establishing quality of health care as the benchmark and recognizing the value of medicine as the tool.

May 1999

Positions and Recommendations on Health Care Reform in Hong Kong

By the Hong Kong Association of the Pharmaceutical Industry (HKAPI)

<p>Background</p> <p>In April 1999, the Government released the Harvard Report (the Report) "Improving Hong Kong's Health Care System: Why and For Whom?" As a long-standing dedicated constituent in the Hong Kong healthcare community committed to enhancing the quality of health care service in Hong Kong, HKAPI underscores the importance of the issue and has set this as its priority this year. The Association is glad to voice its opinions and recommendations, as well as to share them with health care professionals, politicians, the Government and the public.</p> <p>Reform Vision on Quality Health Care</p> <p>Need for Reform. HKAPI is glad that the community has realized the importance and need to reform the health care system in Hong Kong. This is a very precious opportunity for all health care stakeholders to review fundamental issues in our health care system and services provided. We consider that this is of immense importance to Hong Kong. Hence, we are very eager to share our opinions and concerns, with a view to facilitating and contributing to the reform process.</p> <p>Patient-Centred Approach. We support the Report's spirit in taking a "patient-centred approach" in diagnosing the critical issues facing Hong Kong's health care system.</p> <p>Accessibility for Quality HealthCare. For the Hong Kong community, we consider that accessibility to quality health care service for all is both important and attainable. Our vision is that this should be taken as the benchmark target of the whole reform initiative.</p>	<p>Fundamental Concerns on Reform Debate</p> <p>We have fundamental concerns in the Harvard Report and the current public debate. The Association considers that the following issues must be addressed, or otherwise may render the reform incomprehensive, biased and even leading to a wrong conclusion.</p> <p>A Balanced Discussion on Issues Besides Financing is Needed: We consider that the financing issue is important. However, the Report and the public debate have focused too much on health care financing alone. A balanced discussion on other fundamental issues is required to ensure that the reform is comprehensive.</p> <p>Should Establish a Clear Outcome Target for Reform: In answering "Why and For Whom?" to reform, the Report is unclear, however, as to "How And To What End?" the reform is heading. It proposes that the destination of reform is "Integrated Health Care", but the public is not provided with an assessment on the outcome target of the reform. By establishing a clear outcome target, people can then visualize and assess the benefits of reform to them.</p> <p>Should Emphasize on Quality Health Care: The ultimate standard or quality of health care has not been reviewed, even though "improving quality and efficiency" remains as one of the five "specific objectives" in the Report. We consider that emphasizing quality health care in the reform will give the reform a clear purpose that Hong Kong is capable to achieve.</p>	<p>Guiding Principles Should Not Impose Misguided Restrictions: The "guiding principles" which the Harvard team relied upon in developing the reform options reads as "Every resident should have access to <u>reasonable quality</u> and affordable health care". We consider that this has made too early a trade-off on the quality of health care, and hence should be revised to avoid imposing misguided restrictions on the reform.</p> <p>Efficiency Enhancement Should be Underscored: In focusing on financing, the debate takes costs variables as they are. There should be a fundamental review of the efficiency of the present system, and how efficiency can be improved.</p> <p>Need to Recognize the Value of Medicine: In relation to the above, there has been virtually no mention of the role of innovative medicine as one of the major means to improve the efficiency of the health care system. In reality, through appropriate use of medicine, reliance on more expensive treatment like hospitalization can be minimized. Hence, the following can be achieved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficiency of the system improved and total costs of health care lowered • Effectiveness and quality of treatment enhanced • Patients' quality of life enhanced <p>What We Advocate</p> <p>HKAPI aims to help shape a health care system that is patient-centred, accessible for all, and provides efficient, quality health care.</p>	<p>HKAPI advocates the following: Principles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote systemic approach to healthcare budgeting • Enable patient rights and encourage patient responsibility • Promote use of innovative medicine in treatment • Provide unrestricted access to medicine • Encourage market driven competition <p>Recommendations</p> <p>Public Consultation Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The government needs to comprehensively collect and respect the opinions and recommendations of all stakeholders in health care. • Public consultation measures should be organized with a clear timeline to foster public discussion and support. • The Government must ensure that methods of improving the efficiency of the current healthcare system is reintroduced back into the reform debate. <p>Reforming the System</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The government should refer to the international "best practices", information and research on value of medicine as a cost-effective element in health care. • All medicines registered in Hong Kong should be made immediately available to both the public and private sector to ensure patients' accessibility to quality medicine. • Public education in health care should be greatly strengthened. • The health care outcomes of reform options should be researched, specified and taken as one of the benchmarks and evaluation criteria for reform. • A representative, transparent top-level commission should be established to manage the reform process and consider views of various stakeholders.
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Member: International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Associations (IFPMA)

Associate Member: Federation of Medical Societies of Hong Kong