

Request made by the Association for the Rights of the Elderly

The Administration should finance the medical fees paid by elderly Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) recipients to private medical practitioners of Western medicine and Chinese medicine.

The Social Welfare Department's reply

Under the CSSA Scheme, recipients are entitled to free medical services at public hospitals/clinics. We therefore do not pay special grants to CSSA recipients to cover expenses on private medical treatment.

2. In the CSSA Review completed in early 1996, we took into account the expenses on traditional Chinese medicine and those on consulting Chinese herbalists incurred by CSSA households and non-CSSA households in the low income groups as reflected by the data from the 1994/95 Household Expenditure Survey for the purpose of assessing the adequacy of the standard rates of different categories of recipients. In other words, these expenses are covered by the standard rates.

3. Arising from a survey commissioned by the Director of Social Welfare which revealed that a fair proportion of elderly CSSA recipients spent varying amounts on social and other activities which are not essential needs of a living (such as eating out, consulting private medical practitioners, reading newspapers/magazines), the Administration increased the monthly standard rates for elderly CSSA recipients substantially in April 1998 and at the same time merged two annual special grants for the elderly, namely the Chinese New Year Grant and the Social and Recreational Activities Grant, into their standard rates to make up an increase of \$380 a month. Elderly CSSA recipients are free to use the increase in their monthly CSSA payments to meet any expenses.