

For information

Legislative Council Panel on Health Services

Travellers' Health Service

Purpose

This paper reports on the Travellers' Health Service (THS) which commenced operation since July 2000.

Background

2. As announced in the 1999 Policy Objective Booklet on Public Health Programmes, we launched the THS on 3 July 2000 to provide preventive service for travellers and advice on travel-related health risks. The Service was provided in two Port Health Travel Health Centres (located at Wanchai and Cheung Sha Wan) of Department of Health (DH).

Aim and Scope of Service

3. The THS aims at promoting and maintaining the health of the increasing number of people travelling outside Hong Kong through promoting behaviour conducive to health and using appropriate pharmaceuticals to prevent diseases. This is achieved through a two-pronged approach, viz a personalised service and a mass education component.

4. The personalised service is offered to clients by appointment at the Travel Health Centres on a full-cost recovery basis (please see Appendix I for fees schedule). The service includes (a) an individual travel health risk assessment;

(b) planning a schedule of immunization against relevant travel-related diseases; (c) provision of preventive medications and travel health kit; and (d) a comprehensive range of destination-specific travel health advice including non-infectious illnesses and prevention of injuries.

5. The mass education component comprises (a) a bilingual website (address <<http://www.info.gov.hk/trhealth>>) to disseminate, in particular, latest outbreaks reports; (b) telephone enquiry for travel-related health advice; (c) collaboration with the travel industry by empowering tour coordinators with travel health knowledge so that they can in turn advise their clients accordingly, and alerting the industry where appropriate; (d) preparation and dissemination of travel health education pamphlets; and (e) organising travel health exhibitions. These services are provided free of charge.

Delivery of the Service

6. The THS is largely delivered through two Port Health Travel Health Centres which formerly were Vaccination Centres offering vaccination service to fulfill requirements of the International Health Regulations. In addition to travel health services, the Centres continue to carry out other port health functions including the issue of Cremation Permits and granting of Radio Pratique to shipping agents. Each of the Centres is staffed by one doctor, one Registered Nurse and one Assistant Clerical Officer. There is one extra Clerical Assistant working in the Cheung Sha Wan Centre because of the heavy Cremation Permit workload.

Service Utilisation

7. During the THS's first twelve months of operation, the two Centres

provided 2,195 consultations, compared to 1,135 in the previous twelve-months period. The number of immunizations given amounted to 4,921 and the number of telephone enquiries received increased from 5,344 to 9,103. Other new workload included 1,314 courses of preventive medications dispensed, 245 travel health kits sold, and 510 articles on the latest disease outbreaks around the world uploaded to the travel health website. A summary of workload statistics is set out at Appendix II.

8. A customer opinion survey was conducted in the two Centres in the months of April and May 2001. Of the 117 clients surveyed, 60 (or 51%) and 57 (or 49%) rated the service as excellent and good respectively. As for telephone enquiries, there were calls from private practitioners seeking advice on the appropriate vaccinations and medications for their clients who plan to travel abroad. This reflects the recognition of the new service by doctors as an advisor on travel health and further encourages us to strive to set a benchmark for the local practice of travel medicine.

9. Members are requested to note the progress of the Travellers' Health Service. DH will keep under regular review the demand for travel health services and the delivery of service at the Travel Health Centres.

Department of Health
December 2001

Charges for Travellers' Health Service

Category	Item description	Unit Charges (HKD)	Remarks
Consultation	Health risk assessment and advice	340	Does not include vaccinations, medications, etc.
Certificate	Vaccination against yellow fever, and issue of International Certificate of Vaccination against Yellow Fever for travel	180	
Vaccination	Common infectious diseases	60 - 185	
Others	Bloods test and medications	40 - 285	
	Travel health kit	70	

Workload Statistics

I. Port Health Travel Health Centres* (located at Wan Chai and Cheung Sha Wan)	<u>1 Jul 00 - 30 Jun 01</u>	<u>1 Jul 99 - 30 Jun 00</u>
No. of medical consultations:	2195(+93%)	1135
Immunisations given		
– yellow fever vaccine:	1295(+14%)	1135
– other vaccines/immunoglobulin:	3626	-
– blood tests for immunity status:	30	-
Courses of medications dispensed	1314	
Travel health kits sold:	245	-
Telephone enquiries:	9103(+70%)	5344
II. Others		
Travel Health Exhibitions organised	3	-
Lectures to travel industry		
– No. of health talks	20	-
– Attendance (tour co-ordinators)	1,169	-

* *Known as Port Health Vaccination Centres prior to July 2000.*