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(By email: shau@legco.gov.hk)

Dr Hon Joseph Lee Kok-long, JP
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 Panel on Health Services
 Legislative Council
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Dear Dr Hon Lee,

Development of a territory-wide electronic healthcare record sharing system

Thank you for your letter of 16 June 2009, inviting HKDA to give views on the subject at the special meeting of the Panel on Health Services scheduled for Friday, 19 June 2009. In principle, we welcome the Government's proposed development of a territory-wide electronic healthcare record (eHR) sharing system as we envisage this move can generate benefits for the community in various aspects.

The establishment of a patient-oriented electronic record sharing infrastructure can help maintain a more comprehensive and lifelong medical record. Sharing patients' essential medical information including drug history and allergies among healthcare providers can minimize duplicate investigations and treatment and hence provide patients with more timely, efficient and accurate diagnosis. This sharing system will be a useful tool in helping promote the family doctor concept and continuity of care and facilitating referral and follow-up of cases.

The sharing system can also be regarded as a long term investment which serves as a platform to facilitate public-private partnership schemes such as voucher schemes for any future subsidized healthcare.

Whilst supporting the eHR sharing system, we would like to raise our concern over some cases of data leakage that happened earlier. A series of such incidents has aroused the public's worry about the data security problem brought about by record sharing software. We understand that certain mechanisms will be designed to monitor data access in terms of authorized users and types of data to eliminate unauthorized usage and disclosure of private data. However, the Government should take proper measure by raising



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the online security awareness of the civil service, keeping them abreast with the advanced trends of technology development in order to ensure that hidden security risks can be detected in advance.

Maintaining patients' records in electronic format is not a common practice among dental colleagues. The implementation of Elderly Healthcare Voucher Pilot Scheme starting from 1 January 2009 has served as the first step in helping the sector to get more familiar with electronic devices and has paved the way for the development of eHR system among healthcare providers. A user-friendly program design and time-saving data input procedure are therefore essential to gain broad support for the development of such a territory-wide eHR system. To ensure cost-effectiveness of its development, we consider users' feedback should be involved in the design and development of programme. In fact, the Government should consider providing more incentives to the sector such as provision of technical support and training to encourage their participation.

Thank you in advance for taking our views into consideration. We believe upon the implementation of the proposed eHR system, Hong Kong can effectively advance its healthcare system and support the individual's pursuit for good health and good quality of life.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Sigmund Leung
President
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