The Hong Kong Council of Social Service
Submission to Panel on Health Services, Legislative Council
for
the development of an electronic health record
sharing infrastructure in Hong Kong

The Hong Kong Council of Social Service coordinated the pilot scheme of electronic health record sharing in 2007 with the Hospital Authority. There were 29 Old Age Homes from 17 Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) used the system on a trial basis and the response was favourable.

The proposed system would definitely bring long term benefit to all citizens by increasing the quality of health care in Hong Kong. A good number of member agencies of the Council are in fact health care providers in the community. On a daily basis, NGOs are taking care of clients with a range of medical needs. They include the senior persons and disabled people such as physically and mentally challenged. The sharable health record system can further enhance the integrate of care at hospitals with that in the community, which in turn helps to alleviate the demand of medical service in hospital with decreasing re-admission rate and possible early discharge.

In the meantime some of the residential care facilities are experiencing difficulties on providing service for users who had been discharged from hospitals. It can be a time consuming process for the nurses, carers and physiotherapists to follow up with the medication and care plan which could be changed during the hospitalization. On the other hand, the carers providing home-based services suggested that it would provide better integration if they can acquire the information on what has happened in hospital before their service users return home, especially for those frail cases and elders at risk.

While the professionals in NGOs are ready for the new infrastructure, the major hurdle for adoption and wider participation would be affordability. NGOs are unlikely to be able to afford the setup cost for the infrastructure and maintenance with their limited resources. Moreover, the system requirements will demand NGOs to further squeeze their budget for better IT infrastructure so as to hook up with the electronic record system successfully.

We are aware that a steering committee would be formed to mastermind the project.

Since NGOs are in the long run major stakeholders of the system, especially at community level, the steering committee should consist of representatives from the NGO sector.