

**For Information  
on 14 June 2010**

**Legislative Council Panel on Health Services**

**Cataract Surgeries Programme**

**PURPOSE**

This paper briefs Members on the outcome and evaluation of the Cataract Surgeries Programme (the Programme) launched by the Hospital Authority (HA) in 2008, and the extension of the Programme in 2010-11.

**BACKGROUND**

2. Over the years, there has been a steady rise in the number of patients waiting for cataract surgery in HA and this has led to lengthened waiting time for patients. With an aging population in Hong Kong, it is projected that there will be about 22 000 to 25 000 new cataract cases per year in the next three to five years. To better address the service demand and reduce the waiting time of patients, the Government allocated a one-off funding of \$40 million to HA in 2008 to implement the Programme by increasing the surgeries throughput in HA and providing subsidy to patients to undertake surgeries in the private sector through a Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) model. The Panel on Health Services was briefed on the objectives and arrangements of the Programme vide LC paper No CB(2)505/07-08(03) in December 2007.

3. Under the Programme, eligible patients are offered the choice to undertake surgeries in the private sector with a fixed subsidy of \$5,000 subject to co-payment of no more than \$8,000 for each cataract surgery. For patients with limited economic means, such as recipients of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) and patients granted with medical fee waiver, they could choose to receive surgeries without co-payment in the public hospitals through additional operating sessions. Some of the private ophthalmologists participating in the Programme also conduct surgeries for these patients without requiring patients' co-payment on a charitable basis. Details of the Programme are provided at **Annex**.

## **PROGRESS AND EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAMME**

4. HA has invited a total of 30 282 eligible patients on the waiting list for cataract surgeries to join the Programme. A total of 8 781 patients have joined for the Programme and 7 100 of them have already undertaken surgeries. About 95% of the patients joining the Programme have chosen to receive surgery in the private sector. Among the 7 100 patients with surgeries completed, around 1 900 (27%) are patients who received CSSA or medical fee waiver.

5. HA has conducted an evaluation on the implementation and effectiveness of the Programme, having regard to feedback of patients and participating private ophthalmologists collected through surveys, interviews and focus group discussions. The evaluation results are set out in the ensuing paragraphs.

### ***Reduction in waiting time***

6. With the launch of Programme, the waiting time for cataract surgeries in HA has been shortened from around 35.5 months in December 2007 to around 31 months in December 2009. It is the first time in five years that HA has recorded a reduction of waiting time for cataract surgeries. The reduction is more notable when compared with the estimated waiting time of about 42 months in December 2009 had there been no implementation of the Programme.

### ***Service by private sector under the Programme***

7. A total of 81 private ophthalmologists (about 70% of the total registered private ophthalmologists in Hong Kong) have joined the Programme to conduct surgeries for patients who choose to use the service in the private sector. All participating private ophthalmologists are engaged in the electronic patient record system that is connected to HA for sharing and reporting of patient record. As a key quality assurance measure in the Programme, the private ophthalmologists are required to report the complications of cases through an established mechanism. The number of cataract surgeries reported

with complications accounts for 1.5% of all surgeries completed under the Programme. The complication rate compares favourably with the rate of around 2% as reported in overseas. All cases reported with complication have been duly followed up by the relevant private ophthalmologists and HA hospitals.

### ***Response to the Programme***

8. Positive feedback has been received from participating patients in a survey conducted by HA. Overall, 91% of patients surveyed are satisfied with the Programme. About 98% of patients surveyed find it easy to select a suitable ophthalmologist from a sufficient pool of participating private ophthalmologists. The same percentage of patients surveyed consider that the Programme has helped them to receive surgery earlier. Meanwhile, the feedback from the participating private ophthalmologists shows that there is smooth cooperation between the public and private sectors in arranging surgeries for patients and in providing follow up support service where necessary after surgeries.

9. The above outcome and evaluation shows that the Programme has helped HA to better address the growing demand for cataract surgeries and provided more choices for patients through PPP. It has also provided valuable experience in promoting collaboration between the public and private healthcare sectors and encouraging the use of private services by affordable patients.

### **FURTHER IMPROVEMENT OF CATARACT SURGERIES IN 2010-11**

10. In view of the projected increase in demand for cataract surgeries in HA hospitals, the Government has allocated an additional funding of \$55 million to HA to continue to enhance cataract surgeries for patients. With additional funding, HA has planned to provide an additional 5 000 surgeries in public hospitals in 2010-11, which will increase the total throughput of cataract surgeries of HA hospitals to about 25 000 in a year. It is estimated that the throughput of cataract surgeries of HA hospitals would generally be able to meet the demand arising from the new cataract cases in the next few years. HA will at the same time continue to enhance its cataract surgeries to clear the backlog of cases on the waiting list.

11. HA will also extend the Programme in 2010-11 with the target of providing 3 000 additional cataract surgeries through the PPP model. The eligibility criteria of patients, arrangement of the Programme as well as the level of fixed subsidy and co-payment by patient will remain unchanged. HA has already issued the first batch of invitation to eligible patients in May 2010. HA will continue to monitor the implementation of the Programme and the quality of service to participating patients.

### **ADVICE SOUGHT**

12. Members are invited to note the content of the paper.

Food and Health Bureau  
Hospital Authority  
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## **Cataract Surgeries Programme**

### **Background**

To shorten the waiting list for cataract surgeries and the waiting time for such surgeries, the Government has given a one-off allocation of \$40 million to the HA to implement Cataract Surgeries Programme (the Programme) in 2008. The Programme involves the provision of a subsidy to patients to undertake surgeries in the private sector and to increase the surgeries throughput in HA.

### **Patient Eligibility**

2. HA patients are defined as eligible to be invited by the Programme if they:

- have been on the HA hospital waiting lists as at 1 February 2008 (those with longer waited time are given higher priority);
- have been clinically triaged to “Routine Group”;
- only require local anaesthesia for the cataract surgery; and
- are not in the process of being asked to attend any HA hospitals to arrange their cataract surgeries

### **Patients’ Choices**

3. Eligible patients are invited to have a choice of having their cataract surgeries performed by ophthalmologists in the private sector within 6 months. On successful application, the patients could receive a fixed subsidy of \$5,000 and may need to co-pay for an amount not greater than \$8,000 for the package which consists of one pre-operative assessment, the cataract surgery including intraocular lens, and two post-operative checks.

4. Consideration has been given to the patients with limited economic

means such as the low-income and underprivileged. A number of private ophthalmologists agree to conduct surgeries for Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (“CSSA”) recipients or holders of valid full medical fee waiver certificate (“Waiver”) on charitable basis at the subsidized rate without requiring any co-payment. Furthermore, additional resources have been released for HA hospitals to arrange cataract surgeries after normal clinic hours for patients who are CSSA and Waiver patients. A summary of the options available to patients is set out below:

<b>Choice</b>	<b>Regular patients</b>	<b>CSSA / Waiver patients</b>
Do not join the programme and decide to wait on HA waiting lists	✓	✓
Surgery in private sector	✓ (co-payment needed)	✓ (no co-payment)
Surgery in HA arranged through additional operating sessions	✗	✓ (no co-payment)