

**For information on
14 November 2011**

**Legislative Council Panel on Health Services
Pilot Project on Enhancing Radiological Investigation Services
through Collaboration with the Private Sector**

PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members on a pilot initiative to be introduced by the Hospital Authority (HA) for enhancing radiological investigation services for patients from selected cancer groups through collaboration with the private sector (hereafter referred to as the “Pilot Project”).

BACKGROUND

2. Radiological imaging is a crucial tool for assessment of cancer stages. With increase in cancer cases over the years, the demand for radiological imaging services in HA has been rising rapidly. Take Computed Tomography (CT) and Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) – two commonly used radiological investigations for cancer patients – as examples. In 2006-07, the respective number of CT and MRI scans at HA’s hospitals was 369 665 and 90 828. This has increased by about one-third and one-fifth respectively by 2010-11, totaling 490 731 (for CT) and 109 768 (for MRI) scans. **Annex A** shows the number of cancer cases recorded over the past decade, and **Annex B** shows the increase in CT/MRI scans performed by HA over the past five years.

3. HA has been increasing its capacity for radiological investigation services through increased funding from the Government. Eight new CT and two new MRI machines were installed in the past five years, and another new CT machine and three new MRI machines will be put into service in the coming two years. Continued efforts will be made to strengthen radiological investigation services in HA in the light of increased demand.

4. Apart from enhancing service capacity in HA, we consider that providing targeted relief through public-private partnership by making use of radiological investigation services in the private sector is also worth pursuing. This is in line with the service reform directions set out in the First Stage Public Consultation on Healthcare Reform in 2008. These service reform proposals, including promoting public-private partnership, have received broad support from the community. The Government has been implementing them based on the outcomes of the First Stage Public Consultation through increased funding for health services.

THE PILOT PROJECT

Objective

5. The Pilot Project aims to provide enhanced radiological investigation services – normally within five working days upon confirmation of the need for radiological investigation by attending doctors – through collaboration with private sector providers for patients from four selected cancer groups (see paragraph (6) below) under the care of HA. It will be run on a time-limited basis starting from the first quarter of 2012 for two years to test the effectiveness of providing radiological investigation services through public-private partnership for targeted patient groups.

Target Groups

6. The following newly confirmed cancer patients under the care of HA are eligible for participation in the Pilot Project for assessing their cancer staging and/or re-staging -

- (a) colorectal cancer;
- (b) breast cancer;
- (c) nasopharyngeal cancer; and
- (d) lymphoma.

A breakdown of cancer cases by the four selected groups over the past decade is at **Annex C**.

7. These cancer groups are selected based on the expert advice of clinicians and oncologists in HA. Patients newly diagnosed with the diseases will benefit from enhanced radiological investigation services for assessing their cancer staging and/or re-staging to facilitate timely treatment and to allow for sequential management planning.

8. Participation of eligible patients in the Pilot Project is voluntary. HA will provide full subsidy for the costs incurred. HA will continue to provide radiological investigation services for those who choose to stay within HA instead of receiving service from a private service provider under the Pilot Project.

Implementation Schedule

9. Subject to identification of suitable service providers through an open tendering exercise scheduled for end 2011, HA plans to launch the Pilot Project in the first quarter of 2012, initially covering four HA clusters. Patients suffering from colorectal, breast and/or nasopharyngeal cancer who meet the pre-defined, protocol-based eligibility criteria under the care of the Hong Kong East, Kowloon East, Kowloon West and New Territories West Clusters will first be invited to participate in the Pilot Project on a voluntary basis.

10. Upon satisfactory interim evaluation of the effectiveness of the scheme and any necessary fine-tuning having regard to the experience gained in initial implementation, HA will seek to roll out the Pilot Project to all its seven clusters in the fourth quarter of 2012. HA patients suffering from lymphoma meeting the pre-defined, protocol-based eligibility criteria will also be eligible to participate from then on. It is anticipated that the Pilot Project will be completed before the end of 2013.

Service Delivery Model

11. Participating patients will be registered and coordinated through HA to have their staging/re-staging scans conducted at one of the private healthcare providers commissioned to provide radiological investigation services under the Pilot Project. The package of imaging services to be received by patients will be prescribed by HA doctors in advance, and

private healthcare providers are required to transfer the radiological images and radiologists' reports back to HA through an electronic platform for clinicians to formulate subsequent care and treatment plan for patients.

Financial Subsidy

12. Participating patients will be fully subsidized for receiving the radiological investigation services at the designated private service providers. Private providers will be paid according to the number of scans performed. A total of \$65 million has been earmarked for the Pilot Project. It is estimated that some 15 000 to 16 000 scans can be performed. The exact number of beneficiaries will depend on the number of patients participating, the number of scans required for each case and the service charges of participating private service providers to be selected through an open tender.

Quality Assurance and Programme Evaluation

13. All private diagnostic imaging centres in Hong Kong with qualified radiologists providing CT/MRI services meeting the prescribed requirements will be eligible for joining the Pilot Project subject to their being shortlisted through the tendering process. Clinical performance of the awarded providers will be evaluated through continuous assessment according to a pre-defined set of performance indicators.

14. HA will evaluate the arrangements and effectiveness of the project during the pilot period. It will then consider the future of project, including whether it needs to be improved and should be extended having regard to the evaluation results and experience from implementation.

ADVICE SOUGHT

15. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

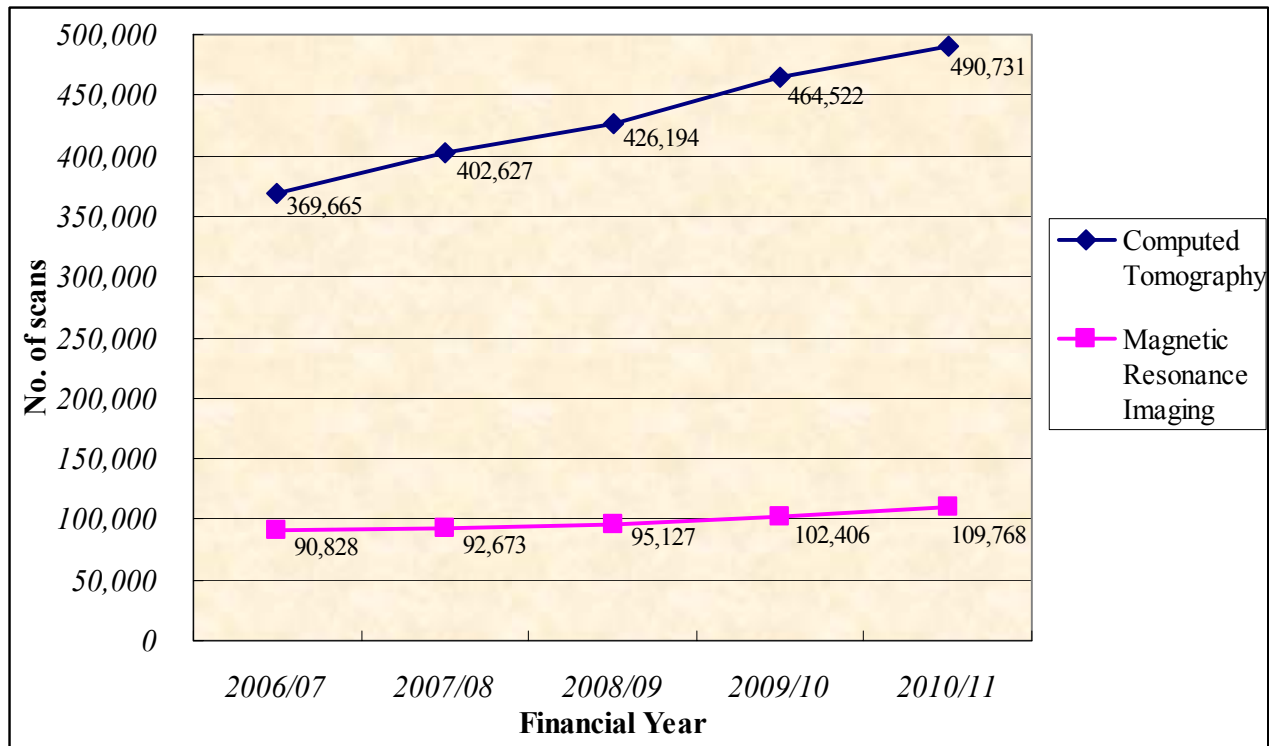
Food and Health Bureau
November 2011

Number of New Cancer Cases in Hong Kong by Age Group

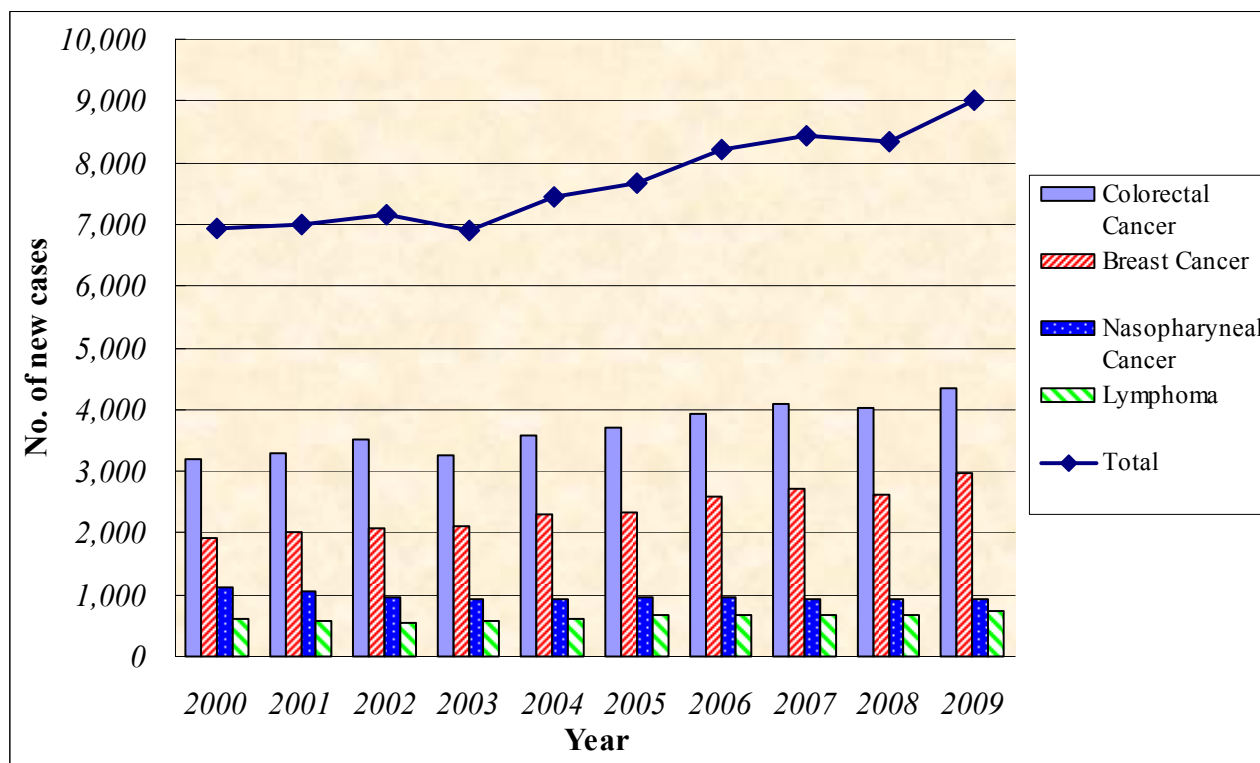
Year	0-19	20-44	45-64	65+	All Ages
2000	222	2,808	6,664	11,639	21,349
2001	199	2,752	6,717	11,729	21,404
2002	202	2,611	6,812	12,232	21,861
2003	203	2,507	7,028	11,542	21,289
2004	201	2,524	7,372	12,424	22,523
2005	183	2,505	7,518	12,563	22,775
2006	197	2,594	8,196	12,756	23,750
2007	192	2,520	8,682	12,942	24,342
2008	194	2,533	8,916	12,991	24,635
2009	189	2,533	9,616	13,638	25,977
Average	198	2,589	7,752	12,446	22,991

Annex B

No. of CT and MRI Scans Performed by HA



Number of Cancer Cases in Hong Kong by Selected Types



Note

Colorectal cancer, breast cancer, nasopharyngeal cancer and lymphoma are among the top ten most common cancers in Hong Kong. It is anticipated that colorectal cancer, now ranked second on the list, will become the leading cancer of our population in the next decade or so. Breast cancer is already the leading cancer of our female population. Cases of lymphoma are also on the rise, whilst nasopharyngeal cancer is found to be more widespread in Southeast Asia including Hong Kong.