

**For discussion
on 4 March 2013**

**Legislative Council Panel on Health Services
Subcommittee on Health Protection Scheme**

**Strategic Review
on Healthcare Manpower Planning and Professional Development**

PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members on the progress of the Strategic Review on Healthcare Manpower Planning and Professional Development.

BACKGROUND

2. In October 2010, we put forth the Health Protection Scheme (HPS), a voluntary and government-regulated health insurance scheme, for public consultation through the Second Stage Public Consultation on Healthcare Reform. The HPS is meant to complement public healthcare services which have been and will continue to be the cornerstone of our healthcare system, acting as the healthcare safety net for all and remaining strong and robust through continued investment and commitment from the Government.

3. The Second Stage Public Consultation on Healthcare Reform revealed broad-based community support for the Government's healthcare reform direction, i.e. strengthening public healthcare as the cornerstone of our healthcare system while reforming private healthcare for greater competition, transparency and consumer protection with a view to enhancing the long-term sustainability of our healthcare system. There was general support for the HPS as a positive and important step to harness private healthcare – both service provision and health insurance – with discipline and supervision. It was widely accepted that the HPS should be developed and implemented in conjunction with efforts to ensure the adequacy of our healthcare manpower and facilitate the development of healthcare services with increased service capacity and better quality assurance.

4. Based on the outcome of the Second Stage Public Consultation on Healthcare Reform, we are adopting a three-pronged approach to take forward the HPS, namely, (a) developing detailed proposals for the HPS including supervisory and institutional frameworks as well as implementation arrangements; (b) facilitating healthcare service development, mainly through regulation of private hospitals; and (c), which is the subject of this paper, conducting a strategic review on healthcare manpower planning and professional development through a high-level steering committee.

THE REVIEW

Establishment of a High-level Steering Committee

5. Against the above backdrop, the Steering Committee on Strategic Review on Healthcare Manpower Planning and Professional Development was established in January 2012 to conduct a strategic review on healthcare manpower planning and professional development in Hong Kong. Chaired by the Secretary for Food and Health, the Steering Committee is tasked to formulate recommendations on how to cope with anticipated demand for healthcare manpower, strengthen professional training and facilitate professional development having regard to the findings of the strategic review, with a view to ensuring the healthy and sustainable development of our healthcare system.

6. Given the complexity of the task and the wide range of issues involved, the Steering Committee is supported by a Coordinating Committee in carrying out its work. Chaired by the Permanent Secretary for Food and Health (Health), the Coordinating Committee comprises six Steering Committee representatives from non-healthcare background as non-official members, who in turn convene six consultative sub-groups (namely the Medical Sub-group, the Dental Sub-group, the Nursing and Midwifery Sub-group, the Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners Sub-group, the Pharmacists Sub-group and the Other Healthcare Professionals Sub-group) to hear and consolidate views from the healthcare professions covered by the strategic review. The terms of reference for the Steering Committee, the Coordinating Committee and the Sub-groups are set out in Annex A, and their membership is listed in Annex B.

Scope and Coverage of the Review

7. The strategic review will assess manpower needs in the various healthcare professions, taking into account the healthcare needs of an ageing population, changes in the delivery models of healthcare services, new and additional demands brought about by service reforms in the healthcare sector, potential increase in demand for private healthcare services including those arising from known and planned private hospital developments and implementation of the HPS, as well as potential increase in demand for private healthcare services from clientele outside Hong Kong, etc.

8. The assessment of manpower needs aside, the strategic review will also recommend measures on professional development to upkeep the professional qualities of the various healthcare professions. It will cover the regulatory structure for the healthcare professions, including the functions and composition of the existing regulatory bodies for healthcare professionals. It will also examine the existing mechanisms for setting and upholding professional standards in different professions, and consider possible tools to further strengthen the professional standards of the services they provide.

9. As the healthcare industry engages a considerable number of personnel coming from a wide range of disciplines, the strategic review has adopted a targeted approach and does not attempt to look into each and every one of them. For the purpose of the present review, we will focus on the 13 healthcare disciplines that are subject to statutory regulation, viz. medical practitioners, dentists, dental hygienists, nurses, midwives, Chinese medicine practitioners, pharmacists, chiropractors, medical laboratory technologists, occupational therapists, optometrists, radiographers and physiotherapists.

10. The 13 disciplines engage nearly 87 000 healthcare professionals. A breakdown of the 13 disciplines by the number of healthcare professionals registered under the relevant legislation is at Annex C. For disciplines currently not subject to statutory regulation and hence not covered in paragraph 9 above, the Other Healthcare Professionals Sub-group may nevertheless provide a platform for views on future development of the relevant professions to be suitably reflected through the consultative process.

Commissioning of Studies

11. To assist the Steering Committee in making informed recommendations to the Government on the means and measures to ensure an adequate supply of healthcare professionals and strengthen professional development of the healthcare professions concerned, we have commissioned the University of Hong Kong (HKU) and the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) to provide professional input and technical support to the review. HKU will conduct a comprehensive projection on the manpower demand for healthcare professionals from the designated disciplines based on objective data collated from a wide range of sources within the community to be analysed and aggregated through statistical methods and scenario modelling, taking into account all known and potential factors and considerations. CUHK will conduct a comparative review of the regulatory frameworks in local and overseas contexts governing registration, licensing, qualifications and professional conduct of the healthcare professions concerned, as well as mechanisms for setting and upholding professional standards and maintaining continuing competence.

LATEST DEVELOPMENT

Progress of the Review

12. The Steering Committee and the six consultative Sub-groups convened two rounds of meetings in 2012, where members deliberated on the manpower situation of the healthcare professions, challenges confronting the professions and their future direction for professional development. Members were also briefed by the two universities on the progress made in their respective studies, including interim findings from the review of international literature and overseas experiences.

Interim Findings from the Commissioned Studies

13. In respect of the HKU study, the Steering Committee and the Sub-groups note that healthcare workforce planning is an extremely complex mission and there is no universal model for estimating healthcare manpower whether in the literature or among the jurisdictions surveyed. The more common approaches adopted include workforce-population ratios, demand/utilisation-based or needs-based models and supply models. Each method however has its own strengths and limitations, and involves many compromises, simplifications and assumptions in the forecasting process. Manpower projection is also a highly data-intensive activity.

The reliability of a model is contingent on the quality and availability of data, especially in respect of the private sector where patient care data are scattered, less complete, or not readily available.

14. Bearing in mind the constraints and challenges of healthcare manpower projection, HKU is in the process of developing a generic forecasting model that suits the local circumstances and is adaptable to changing parameters as far as possible. The model seeks to capture the relevant factors and parameters and estimate the demand and supply of healthcare professionals for the relevant disciplines with an initial planning horizon of 15 to 20 years. It aims to give a broad indication of the manpower demand and supply situation of the different healthcare professions to assist in planning of services as well as training and development of healthcare professionals.

15. On the CUHK study, a survey of the jurisdictions elsewhere covering Asia, Europe and America suggests that many countries are turning to healthcare graduates from abroad to help address short-term manpower shortages at home. There are different criteria for employing international healthcare graduates. Many jurisdictions have a recognised list of qualified overseas institutions for accepting overseas-trained healthcare professionals. These graduates may need some form of professional assessment before working in healthcare institutions, and some jurisdictions require them to complete a specified period of supervised training in lieu of qualifying or licensing examinations or internships.

16. The study also finds that many jurisdictions are undergoing regulatory reforms with an aim to better protect patients' rights, ensure patient safety and improve quality of care. Increasingly healthcare professional regulation is moving from the premise of self-regulation of the profession to protect its own interests to one of co-regulation in partnership with the public to better protect the public's health. There is a global trend for more openness and accountability, including greater involvement of lay persons in regulatory bodies and relevant panels for review and inquiries. It has become a norm for continuing professional development requirements to be made compulsory for healthcare professionals to maintain professional competence. Measures that would put healthcare professions under more stringent regulatory environment such as revalidation and recertification are also developing in some jurisdictions. The investigatory and disciplinary functions in a regulatory body are also increasingly being separated and organised independent of each other, so as to reduce conflict of interests, perceived or real, in detecting and dealing with poor performance. As a next step, CUHK will consolidate the international experience and provide a more detailed

analysis on the possible lessons for Hong Kong having regard to views of local stakeholders.

Implications for Hong Kong

17. As in the case of many advanced economies, Hong Kong's healthcare system faces a number of challenges, including an ageing population, increasing occurrence of lifestyle-related diseases and rising expectations for healthcare services. Confronted by these challenges, we have to look for ways to reform the system for long-term sustainability, while improving service and quality. Among other things, we need to ensure an adequate supply of quality healthcare professionals to cope with the mounting challenges. To this end, we need a manpower supply mechanism that is flexible enough to cater for fluctuations in demand over time and a regulatory framework with proper checks and balances that is conducive to quality improvement and professional development. The common themes emerged from the country and literature review as highlighted by the universities provide useful reference for the Steering Committee to consider measures that would better align the operation and regulation of healthcare professions in Hong Kong with international best practices in the next stage of work, while taking into account factors and considerations unique to our local circumstances.

NEXT STEPS

18. The strategic review is now progressing in full swing. Subject to deliberation of the Steering Committee and progress of the two commissioned studies, we aim to conclude the review in 2013. The recommendations of the Steering Committee, together with the findings from the two studies, will be published for public information upon completion of the review. Subject to the outcome of the review, we will follow up on its recommendations with a view to putting them into action as soon as practicable.

ADVICE SOUGHT

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

**Food and Health Bureau
March 2013**

**Steering Committee on Strategic Review
on Healthcare Manpower Planning and Professional Development**

Terms of Reference

1. To advise and make recommendations to the Government on –
 - (a) the means and measures to ensure an adequate supply of healthcare professionals that could meet the current and projected demands for various healthcare services on a sustainable basis; and
 - (b) an overall plan for strengthening the professional standards and qualities of the various healthcare professions, including necessary and justified changes to the relevant regulatory regime, improvement to training and development arrangements, and introduction of measures that could better align the operation and regulation of our healthcare professions with global best practices.
2. When projecting the demands for healthcare services in its review, the Steering Committee should take into account all possible and likely factors, including, but not limited to, demands arising from an ageing population such as an increasing need for long-term care and mental health services, changes in the delivery models for healthcare services, new and additional demands brought about by service reforms, potential increase in demand for private services in view of the impending implementation of the Health Protection Scheme, known and planned private hospital developments, as well as potential increase in demand for private services of clientele outside Hong Kong.
3. A Co-ordinating Committee and suitable number of sub-groups should be set up under the Steering Committee to tender views and provide advice to the Steering Committee to facilitate deliberation and formulation of recommendations.
4. The Secretary for Food and Health shall appoint members he deems fit and suitable to the Steering Committee, Co-ordinating Committee, and its sub-groups.

**Co-ordinating Committee on Strategic Review
on Healthcare Manpower Planning and Professional Development**

Terms of Reference

1. To assist the Steering Committee in steering discussions at sub-groups by providing the necessary support and guidance, including setting broad agenda, defining scope and parameters of discussions, and providing background materials of relevance to facilitate discussion at sub-groups.
2. To examine and consolidate views, comments and suggestions from sub-groups in a systematic and structured manner, including, but not limited to, identifying commonalities, highlighting differences and assessing implications having regard to financial, legislative, practical and any other relevant considerations.
3. To provide advice to the Steering Committee on issues of a technical nature (e.g. manpower projection exercise).
4. To facilitate deliberation of the Steering Committee by formulating preliminary proposals on how best to ensure an adequate and sustainable supply of healthcare professionals and strengthen development of the relevant healthcare professions, having regard to the consolidated views, comments and suggestions from all sub-groups as well as the opinions of members on the Co-ordinating Committee, outcome of the manpower projection exercise and global best practices.

Sub-groups under the Steering Committee on Strategic Review on Healthcare Manpower Planning and Professional Development

Terms of Reference

1. To provide views, comments and suggestions to the Steering Committee via the Co-ordinating Committee on Strategic Review on Healthcare Manpower Planning and Professional Development on matters concerning –
 - (a) the supply and demand of healthcare professionals, including the conduct of a manpower projection exercise, possible means and measures for ensuring an adequate supply of healthcare professionals that could meet the current and projected demands for healthcare services on a sustainable basis; and
 - (b) the professional standards and qualities of healthcare professionals, including proposals on possible changes to the relevant regulatory regime, possible improvement to training and development arrangements, and possible introduction of measures that aim to better align the operation and regulation of healthcare professionals with global best practices.
2. The Sub-groups need not reach a consensual view on matters put to it for discussion. Where there are differences in view among its members, all views, comments and suggestions should be submitted to the Steering Committee via the Co-ordinating Committee for consideration.

**Membership
of the Steering Committee on Strategic Review
on Healthcare Manpower Planning and Professional Development**

Chairman

Dr. KO Wing-man
Secretary for Food and Health

Members*

Prof. Alfred CHAN Cheung-ming
Prof. Francis CHAN Ka-leung
Dr. Moses CHENG Mo-chi
Prof. Stephen CHEUNG Yan-leung
Mr. Ambrose HO
Mr. LAM Woon-kwong
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Prof. LEE Sum-ping
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Mr. Philip TSAI Wing-chung
Prof. Maurice YAP Keng-hung
Prof. Andrew CHAN Chi-fai
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Prof. Joseph LAU Wan-yee
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Prof. Samantha PANG Mei-che
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* For members appointed in their official capacity, the organizations which they represent are put in brackets. Others without their background specified are members appointed on an ad personam basis.

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Ex-officio Members

Permanent Secretary for Food and Health (Health)
Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare (or representative)
Permanent Secretary for Education (or representative)
Director of Health
Head, Healthcare Planning and Development Office, Food and Health Bureau

Overseas Experts

Prof. Sir Cyril Chantler
Prof. Harvey Fineberg
Prof. Desmond Francis Gorman

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of the Co-ordinating Committee on Strategic Review
on Healthcare Manpower Planning and Professional Development**

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Permanent Secretary for Food and Health (Health)

Members

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Head, Healthcare Planning and Development Office, Food and Health Bureau

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Head, Healthcare Planning and Development Office, Food and Health Bureau

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Alternate Chairman

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Dr. FONG Hang

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Mr. LAU Siu-on

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Ex-officio Member

Director of Health (or representative)

**Number of Registered Healthcare Professionals
(as at 31 December 2012)**

Profession		(No.)
Medical Practitioners	Full Registration	13 006
	Provisional Registration	275
	Limited Registration	175
Dentists		2 258
Dental Hygienists		344
Nurses	Registered Nurses	32 831
	Enrolled Nurses	10 867
Midwives		4 504
Chinese Medical Practitioners (CMPs)	Listed CMPs	2 733
	Registered CMPs	6 565
	CMPs with limited registration	74
Pharmacists		2 127
Medical Laboratory Technologists		3 088
Occupational Therapists		1 517
Optometrists		2 072
Physiotherapists		2 428
Radiographers		1 891
Chiropractors		172
TOTAL :		86 927