

**Speaking Note for the Secretary for Food and Health
at the Special Meeting of the Finance Committee
on 4 April 2014**

Health

Chairman and Honourable Members,

In 2014-15, the estimated recurrent government expenditure on health is \$52.4 billion, which amounts to 17.0% of the Government's total recurrent expenditure and represents an increase of \$2.6 billion or 5.2% over the revised estimate of 2013-14.

2. New resources available in this financial year will mainly be used to provide:

(1) an additional recurrent funding of \$1.67 billion for the Hospital Authority (HA) to meet the demand arising from growing population and demographic changes and to further improve healthcare services, which include:

- providing over 200 additional general hospital beds to boost in-patient capacity;
- enhancing service provision for patients suffering from life-threatening diseases such as heart diseases, stroke, end-stage renal disease and cancer;
- improving management of the waiting list by measures such as setting up of support sessions to relieve the workload of Accident and Emergency Departments, increase in the

number of consultation sessions of specialist out-patient services, establishment of the third joint replacement centre, increase in the number of operating theatre and endoscopy sessions and extension of service hours of hospital dispensaries in phases;

- increasing the supply of drugs, such as the expansion of clinical application of special drugs for treating prostate cancer, continuous provision of enzyme replacement therapy for suitable patients with rare genetic diseases and replenishment of drug inventory to dovetail with the extension of dispensing hours;
- commencing the operation of the first stage of Electronic Health Record Sharing System (eHRSS), subject to passage of the eHRSS Bill by the Legislative Council;
- enhancing mental health service by measures such as increase in funding for the provision of second-generation antipsychotics (SGAs) and anti-dementia drugs to benefit an additional 10 700 patients, and extension of the Case Management Programme for patients with severe mental illness to the 18 districts in the territory; and
- increasing the quota for episodic disease consultations at general out-patient clinics in Kowloon East Cluster, Kowloon West Cluster and New Territories West Cluster by 32 000 in 2014-15 (with a further increase of 56 000 per annum starting from 2015-16, i.e. a total increase of 88 000).

(2) an additional funding of about \$800 million to the Department of Health for the following initiatives:

- doubling the annual voucher amount for each eligible elder from \$1,000 to \$2,000 and converting the Elderly Health Care Voucher Scheme into a recurrent programme;
- developing a colorectal cancer screening pilot programme for target groups and formulating other supportive measures for cancer prevention and screening;
- launching the Outreach Dental Care Programme for the elderly in residential care homes and day care centres as a recurrent programme;
- providing support for the operation of the clinical information management system and the preparation for the launching of the eHRSS;
- strengthening intervention services such as enhancement of education and publicity on breastfeeding, and the incorporation of varicella (chickenpox) vaccine into the Childhood Immunisation Programme; and
- enhancing the services of Elderly Health Centres (EHCs) through the provision of one additional clinical team in Lek Yuen EHC in 2014-15 (and one more clinical team in Wan Chai EHC in 2015-16).

3. Here below I would like to highlight four specific topics, namely planning for public hospitals, mental health, healthcare reform and Chinese medicine development.

Public Hospital and Healthcare Infrastructure Expansion

4. The Government has made continuous efforts to deploy more resources for expanding our public healthcare infrastructure, building new hospitals and improving existing hospital facilities. The construction of a new rehabilitation block under phase 2 of the redevelopment of Caritas Medical Centre has been completed, while the development of a community health and wellness centre under the redevelopment of Yan Chai Hospital will be completed this year. We have commenced the construction of Tin Shui Wai Hospital and Hong Kong Children's Hospital, which will provide 300 and 468 beds respectively upon completion. We are preparing for the expansion of United Christian Hospital and the redevelopment of Kwong Wah Hospital. A strategic planning for a new acute hospital at Kai Tak Development Area is also underway. Moreover, we will seek funding approval of the Legislative Council for the redevelopment of Queen Mary Hospital and Kwai Chung Hospital.

5. As regards information technology facilities for healthcare provision, we are developing a territory-wide eHRSS. The objective is to maintain a more complete set of medical records for each participating individuals. This will improve healthcare quality and promote public-private partnership for enhanced continuity of healthcare services for the public. We are drafting the legislation on the eHRSS and will introduce the Bill to the Legislative Council in due course. Subject to approval of the Bill, we expect to launch the eHRSS by the end of 2014 to enable sharing of patients' electronic health records among healthcare providers in both public and private sectors with the patients' consent.

Mental Health

6. The Government is committed to promoting mental health of the public. Comprehensive mental health services are provided for persons in need, so as

to facilitate their rehabilitation and re-integration into society. We will review existing services from time to time and, where necessary, render targeted support to persons with mental health problems. The Case Management Programme mentioned just now is one example. To further strengthen efforts on this front, a Review Committee on Mental Health has been set up to focus on the study of the existing policy on mental health and the review of current service provision, with a view to mapping out the future direction for development of mental health services in Hong Kong. We will brief the Panel on Health Services on the latest development at its meeting this month.

Healthcare Reform

7. Having regard to the outcome of the Public Consultation on Healthcare Reform, we are taking forward a number of reform initiatives, which include reviewing the healthcare manpower strategy, formulating detailed proposals for the Health Protection Scheme (HPS) and promoting the development of healthcare services.

8. As regards the review of healthcare manpower planning, the Steering Committee on Strategic Review on Healthcare Manpower Planning and Professional Development is working at full strength and will, upon completion of its review, make recommendations on how to cope with the anticipated demand for healthcare manpower, strengthen professional training and facilitate professional development, with a view to ensuring the healthy and sustainable development of Hong Kong's healthcare system. As for HPS, we are considering the details of the scheme and will put up concrete recommendations in the year. To further enhance the quality and transparency of private hospital services and increase protection of consumer rights, we are reviewing the Hospitals, Nursing Homes and Maternity Homes Registration Ordinance. By strengthening the regulatory control over private hospitals, the public will receive healthcare services of higher quality, with greater transparency and which are better managed and more efficiently run.

Chinese Medicine Development

9. The Government has been adopting the concept of “evidence-based medicine” in promoting the development of the Chinese medicine industry in Hong Kong. Since the enactment of the Chinese Medicine Ordinance in 1999, we have strived to establish and improve the regulatory regime for Chinese medicine, accord a professional status to Chinese Medicine Practitioners and ensure the safety, quality and efficacy of Chinese medicines. In accordance with the proposal of the Chief Executive in the 2013 Policy Address, we set up the Chinese Medicine Development Committee in February 2013 to focus on the deliberation and study of four key areas, namely personnel training and professional development, Chinese medicine services development, research and development as well as development of Chinese medicines industry, on the basis of the well-established regulatory regime. The Chinese Medicine Practice Sub-committee and the Chinese Medicines Industry Sub-committee have been set up under the Committee to focus on the study of various issues, including the feasible mode of operation and regulatory details for the establishment of the first Chinese medicine hospital in Hong Kong.

10. The Chinese Medicine Development Committee and its two Sub-committees have convened a number of meetings to discuss various issues about Chinese medicine. We also briefed the Panel on Health Services on the discussions and progress in this aspect on 17 March 2014.

11. Chairman, my colleagues and I are now happy to answer questions from Members.