



Pharmacists Connect

Website: <https://www.facebook.com/pharmacistsconnect/>

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27 June 2017

Dear Prof Hon Joseph Lee,

**Re: Strategic Review on Healthcare Manpower Planning and Professional Development - Pharmacist**

Pharmacists Connect would like to address a few points mentioned by the report in regards to the pharmacists' workforce.

**1. Pharmacists Are Underutilized**

According to the report, from 2011 to 2016, there was a 29.7% growth in the supply of pharmacists' manpower, raising the pharmacist-to-population ratio from 0.3/1000 in 2010 to 0.4/1000 in 2016. It is estimated by the report that Year-on-year FTE gap decrease from 47 (2.5%, best guestimate) in 2017 to -283 (-11%, best guestimate) in coming 13 years, indicating a surplus in pharmacist supply.

The professional development of the pharmacist profession is ongoing while the key role of pharmacist as primary health gatekeeper is still being underutilized and undervalued. Pharmacists are key professionals in the primary healthcare sector. Our roles range from the promotion of public health, enhancement of appropriate use of community health services in order to reduce burden on public health sector. Community pharmacist should be supported to provide primary healthcare services. Public-private partnership in community pharmacies and residential care homes for the elderly to dispense prescriptions from public sectors, and extension of Health Care Voucher to pharmacist's service should help to promote role of pharmacists as primary health gatekeeper, and to divert burden of public health sector.

To create greater public accessibility to pharmacy services, and to ensure improved oversight of the sale of drugs, we encourage the government to take advantage of the available pharmacist manpower and implement the recommendation from the 2009 Food and Health Bureau report on the *Regulation of Pharmaceutical Products in Hong Kong*.

**2. Continuous Professional Education or Development (CPE/CPD) requirement**

Currently there is neither mandatory nor voluntary CPE/CPD requirements on annual renewal of pharmacists practicing certificate under Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance (Cap.138). As described in the report, Hong Kong's policy in this regard does not align with most developed countries in Europe, America and Asia Pacific. We recognize that a mature CPE/CPD system is indispensable to maintain quality of any healthcare professionals. Therefore we recommend that the government and pharmacy sector work together to prioritize investments in the professional



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development of all pharmacists, so that they are well equipped to assist with the medication related needs of the Hong Kong people. This may include non-industry funding (unbiased) training courses, training in evidence-based medicine, and the development of a minimum standard for pharmacist CPE/CPD.

### **3. Better Pharmacist Workforce Data**

The Department of Health annually administers a voluntary Health Manpower Survey to a variety of health professionals. This is an excellent first step. However, we suggest that the survey should be mandatory and cover all health professionals. Specifically for pharmacists, it could be administered prior to the time of registration renewal. Consideration should also be given to the mandatory collection of key statistics for non-domestic pharmacists who have applied to write the pharmacist registration examinations. This key data, about employment in the pharmacy profession will be of value to the profession, decision makers, and employers,

We look forward to discussing these suggestions in more detail.

Yours sincerely,

Jason Tong  
President