

**For discussion
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Panel on Health Services

Subcommittee on Issues Relating to the Development of Chinese Medicine

Government-Subsidised Chinese Medicine Out-Patient Services and Integrated Chinese Western Medicine In-Patient Services

Purpose

This paper aims to brief members the implementation of Government-subsidised Chinese Medicine (CM) services starting from 1 March 2020, including the new subsidised out-patient services in the 18 Chinese Medicine Clinics cum Training and Research (CM Clinics) at district level and the Integrated Chinese Western Medicine (ICWM) in-patient services.

Background

2. The direction of CM development was set under the 2001 Policy Address. Up to 2014, the Hospital Authority (HA) has already established a Chinese Medicine Centre for Training and Research (CMCTR) in each of the 18 districts aiming to promote CM services based on “teaching” and “research”. Each CMCTR operates on a tripartite collaboration model involving the HA, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) and a local university. The NGOs are responsible for the day-to-day clinic operation. The Government provides subsidy for their daily operating expenses to the 18 CMCTRs through HA while the CMCTRs operate on a self-financing mode through services charges. The out-patient services provided include CM general consultation, acupuncture service and bone-setting/tui-na treatments.

Renaming of the CMCTRs

3. The Government has announced in Chief Executive's 2018 Policy Address that CM would be incorporated into the healthcare system in Hong Kong and would implement a development framework with increased recurrent resources to develop CM services, amongst others, including the transformation of the existing 18 CMCTRs into

Government-subsidised CM Clinics at district level. In order to reflect the new role and functions of the CMCTRs, the CMCTRs have been renamed as “Chinese Medicine Clinics cum Training and Research Centres” (CM Clinics) with effect from March 2020, to provide Government-subsidised CM out-patient services as district CM Clinics.

New Government-Subsidised CM Out-Patient Services

4. The HA has completed the process of open tendering and selection of suitable NGOs to run the 18 CM Clinics in accordance with their operating model, with the new Government-subsidised out-patient services being included in the new contract. Under the new model, the Government will provide an annual quota of 620 000 for subsidised out-patient services in these 18 district CM Clinics, including treatment-related CM general consultation (with not more than five doses of CM drugs), acupuncture service and bone-setting/tui-na treatments. The new subsidised out-patient fee will be \$120 per visit for eligible Hong Kong residents. The fees are waived for recipients of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance and the Higher Old Age Living Allowance aged 75 or above.

Non-Subsidised CM Services

5. Apart from Government subsidised services, the CM Clinics will continue to run the non-Government-subsidised CM services provided all-along, such as preventive medicine, natural moxibustion, CM expert consultation etc. The charges are set by the management committees of respective CM Clinics to provide more consultation choices to the public.

On-the-Job Training for CM Professionals

6. Apart from CM services, the 18 CM Clinics will continue offer training programmes. The CM Clinics have launched a new training programme in March 2020 to comprehensively enhance the clinical ability and professional standard of CMP trainees by adopting “evidence-based” medicine as an approach to develop solid clinical capability. This programme is structured by a progressive training curriculum led by a senior CMP in the clinic in order to increase the clinical capability of the CMP trainees. Local full-time CM undergraduates can apply for this 3-year on-the-job training programme

and they, if selected, would be employed as CMP trainees. The NGOs operating the CM Clinics are required to employ 12 CMP trainees at each CM clinic and provide training to them. At present, there are a total of 216 CMP trainees training quotas in the 18 CM Clinics among which 72 quotas are reserved for CM graduates who have experience of clinical practice for less than one year.

7. Apart from the above training programmes for the CMP trainees, the CM Clinics will continue to enhance various types of on-the-job training for CMPs at other levels. These include clinical training, visiting scholar programmes, scholarships at junior and advanced levels, scientific research and practical training, commissioned training in western medicine, study in CM drugs, online learning etc.

8. We are also offering related training for CM drug professionals at the same time, including programmes on CM drug professional training, Guangdong Province CM Hospital attachment training and fundamental knowledge on Western medicine. We are planning to enhance scholarship-based training programmes as well as Mainland/overseas internship scheme etc. to enhance the expertise of CM drug professionals. With the 18 CM Clinics which serve as a platform for nurturing talents through their provision of systematic training schemes, we aim to prepare for the future development of CM and the establishment of the CM Hospital (CMH).

9. As at 31 December 2019, there was a total of 415 CMPs in the 18 CM Clinics. The terms of employment and remuneration packages are determined by the respective NGOs. The NGOs would review and adjust the salaries of CMPs annually having regard to market situation. The HA has all along reviewed the remuneration packages of staff in the CM Clinics with the NGOs having regard to Government policy from time to time, and has allocated additional recurrent resources thereafter to increase the salaries of staff at all levels. In the financial year of 2019/20, the monthly salaries of CMPs¹ in the CM Clinics are not less than \$35,000, and those of CMP trainees² are not less than \$22,000. The Government will continue to allocate more resources thereto and review the remuneration packages and training opportunities for staff of the CM Clinics, with a view to further enhancing their career prospects

¹ CMPs are those with more than 3 years' experience of clinical practice.

² CMP trainees are those with not more than 3 years' experience of clinical practice.

and preparing for the development of the CMH.

ICWM In-Patient Services

10. To help gather experiences in the operation of ICWM and CM in-patient services, the HA has been commissioned by the Government in 2014 to implement the ICWM Pilot Programme (the Pilot Programme). Through the implementation of the Pilot Programme in designated public hospitals, the HA guides the development of the ICWM service model based on both the ICWM operational and clinical frameworks. The Pilot Programme is currently implemented in 7 designated public hospitals to provide ICWM in-patient treatment for patients of 4 selected disease areas (namely stroke, low back pain, shoulder and neck pain, as well as cancer palliative care).

11. Prior to March 2020, ICWM in-patients had to pay an additional daily fee of \$200 (excluding the general public hospital service fee). Starting from 1 March 2020, the Government has increased its subsidy to reduce the additional daily fee for ICWM in-patient services from \$200 to \$120.

12. Besides, the HA has appointed an external organisation to conduct an evaluation study of the Pilot Programme to serve as reference for the future development of ICWM services and the CMH. The study has been completed. We would follow up on the results and suggestions of the evaluation study and explore with the HA on the further development of the Pilot Programme in other hospitals.

Advice Sought

13. Members are invited to note the paper and provide comments.

Hospital Authority
Food and Health Bureau
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