

**For information
on 17 March 2020**

**Legislative Council Panel on Health Services
Subcommittee on Issues Relating to the Support for Cancer Patients**

**Support to Cancer Patients and Carers and
Role of Non-governmental Organisations**

PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members on the support to cancer patients and their carers, and the direction of enhancing cancer services in collaboration with non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

2. The Government is committed to stepping up the prevention and control of cancer, and the support for cancer patients and their carers. To this end, the Government launched the Hong Kong Cancer Strategy in July 2019 which offers a holistic plan on actions for cancer management. It is our goal to reduce the incidence and mortality rate of cancer through better access to evidence-based prevention and screening; to enhance quality of life of cancer patients and survivors by providing patients with early diagnosis, timely treatment and palliative care and by establishing a sustainable service model for cancer survivors; and to build up our capacity to fight against cancer through surveillance, medical technology, scientific research, and partnership and resources in the community.

SUPPORT TO CANCER PATIENTS AND CARERS

3. Throughout the cancer journey, the Hospital Authority (HA) adopts a multi-disciplinary team approach in providing cancer treatment and care services to address the multi-faceted needs of patients and their families or carers. Doctors, nurses, medical social workers, clinical psychologists, radiation therapists, medical physicists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, dietitians, other allied health professionals, spiritual workers, and volunteers all work as a team to provide holistic care to cancer patients.

Cancer Case Manager Programme

4. The HA has implemented the Cancer Case Manager (CCM) programme to improve care coordination for patients with complex breast or colorectal cancer since 2010-11. Under the programme, CCMs act as the contact persons between patients and doctors as well as the care coordinators who navigate the patients along the patient journey and facilitate the coordination of the diagnostic process and treatment. Since 2014-15, the CCM programme has covered all seven clusters under the HA. As of December 2019, a total of around 20 300 breast cancer new cases and 23 900 colorectal cancer new cases benefited from the programme.

5. In 2016, the HA conducted a patient satisfaction survey on the CCM programme, the results of which showed that patients were satisfied with the programme. Another survey on the quality of life conducted during the same period also showed that patients covered by the CCM programme were satisfied with their quality of life.

6. CCM plays a crucial role throughout the patient journey. The CCM programme has proven to have improved care coordination throughout the complex cancer patient journey. With the positive feedback of the programme, the HA will enhance the CCM service by reinforcing CCM's role as care coordinator and standardising the patient care pathway. The HA will extend the coverage of the CCM services from currently breast cancer and colorectal cancer to other cancer types. It is anticipated that the CCM service would be extended to two to three additional cancer types, including gynaecological cancer and haematological cancer, in the coming two years. By standardising the patient care pathway via the rolling out of CCM programme for different cancer types, service accessibility for cancer treatment is expected to be further improved, which would help alleviate the pressure and anxiety of patients and their carers due to the complex treatment process.

7. Meanwhile, the HA will continue to adopt a holistic patient-centred approach with cancer care services provided by multi-disciplinary team to address patients' social and psychological needs, as well as the needs of their families or carers.

Patient Resources Centres

8. Along the patient journey for combating the diseases, the responsible clinical team will provide support to the needs of the patients as well as the carers. In addition, Patient Resource Centres (PRCs) in the HA serve as hospital focal points in engaging

the community, and liaising with patients and carers for enhancing support according to service needs. To promote partnership with patients to provide patient-centred care, the HA has established PRCs in every cluster to support patients and their families or carers, including facilitating the networking between patient and patient groups for mutual support. As of December 2019, there were over 220 patient groups under the HA's liaison network at the corporate or cluster and hospital levels, including more than 40 cancer-related patient groups

9. Besides, the HA has partnered with the Hong Kong Cancer Fund to establish a total of seven Cancer Patient Resource Centres (CPRCs) in Queen Mary Hospital, Tuen Mun Hospital, Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital, Prince of Wales Hospital, Princess Margaret Hospital, Queen Elizabeth Hospital and United Christian Hospital. The CPRCs provide free resources and services for cancer patients, including a cancer information library, professional counselling services, rehabilitation workshops, peer support activities, services which seek to provide information and assistance to newly-diagnosed patients, as well as rehabilitation or palliative support for those who are going through other stages of the cancer journey.

Cancer Information Platform

10. During the treatment and self-care process, patients may feel helpless due to lack of knowledge of the disease. Currently, the HA has developed a Smart Patient Website to provide a one-stop electronic platform with practical disease information for chronic disease patients, including cancer patients, and their families and carers, so as to strengthen their ability on disease management and self-care skills.

11. In the Hong Kong Cancer Strategy rolled out by the Government in 2019, one of the targets is to develop a one-stop online resource hub for cancer, covering latest cancer statistics in Hong Kong, policy on prevention and control of cancer, health information on cancer prevention and screening, cancer diagnosis and treatment under the public healthcare system, support for patients and survivors, and latest development in cancer research, etc. The dedicated online resource hub could enhance health communications and serve as a centralised directory to facilitate the public, cancer patients, their families and carers to obtain cancer-related information in a more timely manner and find out how to seek support when facing cancer diagnosis and treatment.

ENHANCING MEDICAL-SOCIAL COLLABORATION

12. In addition to providing appropriate support to patients during the journey of

cancer treatment, we are equally concerned about the quality of life of patients after their completion of treatment. Appropriate support can help patients improve their self-care ability and adapt to a new life in the community. One of the major goals of the Hong Kong Cancer Strategy is to support cancer survivors by reinforcing medical-social collaboration and patient empowerment. To achieve this goal, it involves close collaboration with community partners, cancer support or patient groups and other relevant stakeholders to provide better support to both the patients and their carers.

Establishing a sustainable service model for cancer survivors

13. To enhance cancer patients' self-care ability and to facilitate their adaptation to the new life in the community, the HA will strive to provide seamless transitional care for cancer survivors, align survivorship care across clusters and strengthen collaboration with primary care providers and community partners with a view to offering high quality and sustainable care for patients.

14. To help cancer survivors adapt to the new life, the HA will provide structured and need-based supportive care. Upon the completion of cancer treatment, hospitals will provide systematic assessment of the patients' needs and provide relevant support services. The HA will set up nursing coordinators to facilitate survivorship care, which includes providing support to multi-disciplinary teams and Family Medicine Team, facilitating referrals, providing guidance, psychosocial support and education to patients, and reinforcing collaboration with NGOs and patient support groups. Through the enhancement of medical-social collaboration, the HA expects to better leverage the existing community resources, and, with a more structured support care programme, it would enhance cancer survivors' self-care skills, and assist them in building confidence and a new life in the community.

Palliative care and support

15. The HA provides palliative care services with a comprehensive service model for patients suffering from life-limiting illnesses and their families to meet their physical, psychological, social and spiritual needs. The aim is to facilitate a more peaceful process at the final stage of life. Psychosocial support and bereavement counselling would be provided to families in need.

16. The HA will collaborate with community partners and welfare organisations on provision of ambulatory palliative care support to patients in the community in order to facilitate care in place and reduce unnecessary hospitalisation. The HA will

strengthen day care, home care, support to residential care homes, and collaboration with community partners to support terminally-ill cancer patients. The HA has been strengthening the support to elderly patients living in residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) facing terminal illness, including cancer, through enhancing end-of-life care for elderly patients living in RCHEs. The HA will continue to review and enhance related services by networking with community partners to meet patients' need.

POOLING TOGETHER COMMUNITY RESOURCES

17. There are currently different community groups providing cancer-related services. To better coordinate all key resources available, we plan to create a "Cancer Network of Partners" – an engagement platform involving community partners such that community efforts can be aligned, service gaps identified and service enhancements offered. With the establishment of an engagement platform with community partners, the service gap and role of different parties in the community will be better defined. As such, the utilisation of resources can be maximised for better support to cancer patients and carers without overlapping. With the provision of integrated information on the online resource hub, cancer patients and their carers will have access to comprehensive information of cancer support provided by the Government and community organisations, and will have better knowledge of how to seek help and opt for suitable services.

WAY FORWARD

18. We will continue to strive to provide the necessary support for cancer patients and their carers in different stages of the cancer management process, including treatment, survivorship and palliative care, along the above strategies. We will also actively promote medical-social collaboration to ensure provision of support services that would better meet the needs of cancer patients and carers at the community level.

ADVICE SOUGHT

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

Food and Health Bureau
Hospital Authority
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