

**For discussion on
14 April 2025**

Legislative Council Panel on Health Services

**Latest progress on establishing the
Institute for Medical Advancement and Clinical Excellence**

PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members on the latest progress on establishing the Institute for Medical Advancement and Clinical Excellence (“IMACE”).

BACKGROUND

2. The quality of healthcare services received by citizens when they seek consultations hinges on the expertise and experience of individual medical practitioners. At present, there is neither an official system in setting common clinical standards and guidelines between public and private healthcare services, nor a set of uniform standards for public and private healthcare professionals to refer to when assessing whether certain medical solutions are effective and efficient. Patients with similar conditions may undergo very different clinical pathways, resulting in potential variance in the standard of care. Some patients may have received diagnoses and treatments which are not most effective and necessary.

3. With an ageing population in Hong Kong, increasing prevalence in chronic diseases and continuing innovations in medical technology, the demand for healthcare services will be ever-growing. The current health expenditure¹ in Hong Kong has increased from \$119,822 million (in 2012-13) to \$226,311 million (in 2022-23) over the past ten years. If the healthcare sector can enhance consensus in supporting public and private healthcare professionals to identify more cost-effective medical options, it will help alleviate the pressure of mounting health expenditure while enhancing the quality of care to benefit patients.

¹ Exclude identified COVID-19 expenditure.

4. With reference to global experience, clinical protocols formulated by the healthcare sector with substantial evidence-based analyses can help reduce unnecessary or ineffective medical practices, thereby protecting patients' interest and enhancing the overall quality of care. In view of this, the Chief Executive announced in the 2024 Policy Address that the Government would establish a professional platform for developing evidence-based clinical protocols and explore the feasibility of devising service quality and efficiency standards for the public and private healthcare sectors, with a view to enhancing the quality and effectiveness of medical services.

OBJECTIVES OF ESTABLISHING THE IMACE

5. The Health Bureau has invited healthcare professions to take lead in establishing the IMACE, aiming to set up a professional-led and evidence-based platform comprising members from across the public and private healthcare sectors in Hong Kong. This will enable the healthcare sector to collect data and cases in an effective manner for detailed deliberation on clinical practices in screening, diagnosis, treatment and management of various diseases, as well as evaluating the efficacy of different medical options (e.g. drugs, medical devices, diagnostic techniques, surgical procedures, non-pharmacological interventions and new medical innovations).

6. Through the work of the IMACE, representatives of the healthcare sector can share their practical clinical experience and identify more effective medical options for tackling various diseases. It can also foster professional exchange among healthcare personnel to learn about and apply the latest technologies in their daily practice, and further promote the development of Hong Kong into an international health and medical innovation hub.

7. With its comprehensive analysis of clinical evidence and data from both public and private primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare services, as well as extensive and detailed discussions with relevant professional stakeholders and the healthcare sector, the IMACE aims to take forward its work in the following areas –

- (a) to develop and promulgate clinical guidelines applicable to both the public and private healthcare sectors, including clinical procedures in selected specialties, and to offer practical and up-to-date advice to professionals in dealing with specific diseases and conditions;

- (b) to evaluate the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of medical options on an evidence-based approach, and other medical innovations and technologies, that are appropriate to the local context;
- (c) to formulate quality and outcome indicators of selected healthcare services, as a means to assist professionals and other major stakeholders in objectively assessing the quality and efficiency of certain healthcare services;
- (d) to facilitate exchanges among various healthcare professions on the best medical practices and experiences, so as to enhance the capacity in advocating clinical governance and quality assurance amongst these players; and
- (e) to promote public education on citizens' understanding towards possible medical options for various diseases, and to advise the Government on policies and measures for driving clinical excellence and improving practice quality of healthcare professionals.

PREPARATORY WORK

8. In December 2024, the Secretary for Health wrote to invite seven major institutions in the Hong Kong healthcare sector to establish the IMACE as its founding members. They include the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine (“HKAM”), the Department of Health, the Hospital Authority, the Primary Healthcare Commission, the Faculty of Medicine of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the LKS Faculty of Medicine of the University of Hong Kong, and the Hong Kong Private Hospitals Association. All the invited institutions responded positively on their participation.

9. In addition to the aforementioned founding members by invitation, and having regard to the specific needs of the deliberation topics, the IMACE may also invite professional members (e.g. industry associations for medical practitioners and other healthcare personnel, as well as specialists in certain fields) and co-opted members (e.g. patient groups) to join its meetings in future, thereby facilitating more holistic deliberations.

10. To uphold the principle of professional autonomy, the Health Bureau will fund the operation of the IMACE without being involved in its governance as well as evidence-based researches and discussions. On the Bureau's invitation, the HKAM has nominated its past President, Professor Gilberto Ka-kit LEUNG,

to serve as the IMACE's first Convenor and will provide secretarial support to the IMACE's initial operation.

11. The IMACE anticipates that its documents to be released in future, including but not limited to guidelines, evaluations, indicators, standards and benchmarks, will mainly serve as reference materials for professionals. Whereas the IMACE will actively encourage and assist healthcare professionals in appropriately applying relevant professional reference materials, healthcare professionals will continue to exercise their professional judgement and clinical experience in determining the medical options for individual patients, taking into account the actual practice in Hong Kong and respective professions.

12. As things currently stand, the IMACE is targeted to be formally established with its inaugural meeting held in the first half of 2025. It will then begin formulating its various major initiatives.

ADVICE SOUGHT

13. Members are invited to note the latest progress on establishing the IMACE.

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