

Public Accounts Committee Meeting on 16 December 2014
Chapter 2 of the Report Number 63 of the Director of Audit
“Provision of health services for the elderly”
Remarks by the Director of Health

Chairman and Members of the Committee,

First of all, thank you Chairman for letting me respond in brief to the parts related to elderly health services provided by the Department of Health as mentioned in Report Number 63 of the Director of Audit. I would also like to take this opportunity to briefly introduce our follow-up work in response to the Audit’s recommendations.

Elderly health services provided by the Department of Health

In line with the Government’s policy on primary healthcare services for the elderly, the Department of Health provides a wide variety of health services for the elderly, including:

- (1) the establishment of 18 Elderly Health Centres (EHCs), one in each district of Hong Kong, to provide comprehensive primary care services for the elderly aged 65 or above, with an aim to improve their self-care ability, encourage healthy living and strengthen family and carer support in taking care of the elderly so as to minimize their illness and disability;
- (2) through 18 Visiting Health Teams (VHTs), reach out into the community to conduct health promotion activities for the elderly, as well as providing training to carers, including the staff of residential care homes for the elderly, to update their health knowledge and skills in caring for the elderly;
- (3) through initiatives including the Elderly Health Care Voucher Scheme (EHCVS) to promote primary care and facilitate the elderly in choosing suitable family doctors to provide them with one-stop health services;
- (4) collaboration with nine non-governmental organizations (NGOs) since July 2013 to provide subsidised health assessment to 10 000

elderly aged 70 or above so as to enhance the preventive healthcare services for the elderly and help encourage NGOs to provide similar services in the community.

Review and follow-up work

With an ageing population, it is expected that the demand for primary healthcare services for the elderly will continue to grow. We will take into account the Audit's recommendations and review the EHCs' capacity and strategic directions with a view to reducing the waiting time for new enrollments and their first health assessment. Besides, the review will also take into account the experience gained from the implementation of the Elderly Health Assessment Pilot Programme. We also undertake to review the reasons for the variations in waiting time of allied health counseling services in different EHCs and the reasons for no-show, so as to implement relevant improvement measures.

Furthermore, we shall review the mode of operation of the VHTs in conducting health promotion activities with a view to introducing service improvements. We will also conduct a comprehensive review of the EHCVS in mid-2015 and continue to encourage participation of the elderly and the healthcare service providers as well as strengthen monitoring measures.

Chairman and Members of the Committee, we shall fully cooperate with the Public Accounts Committee's work, critically consider the Audit's recommendations and review results, and endeavour to enhance the elderly services provided by the Department of Health.

Thank you.