



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部醫務衛生局
Health Bureau, Government Secretariat
The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

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Ms Macy NG
Senior Council Secretary (4)3
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road, Central, Hong Kong

Dear Ms NG,

**Follow-up items from meetings of
Legislative Council Panel on Health Services**

The Legislative Council Panel on Health Services requested supplementary information on governance of the Hospital Authority (HA); registration and procurement of drugs; human resource management arrangements; usage of specialist and surgery services; matters relating to facility maintenance; tender arrangement for a contractor involved in a medical incident; and the situation in relation to flu vaccination of HA's staff, etc. at the meetings on 24 March and 14 May 2021, and 10 March, 12 May, 9 June, 17 November 2023 as well as 8 November 2024 respectively. In consultation with the HA, the Government's reply is set out at Annex.

Yours sincerely,


(Ms Alice WONG)
for Secretary for Health

c.c. Chief Executive, Hospital Authority (Attn: Ms Dorothy LAM)

**Follow-up items from meetings of
Legislative Council Panel on Health Services**

24 March 2021 meeting: Report on corporate governance of the HA

The HA is a statutory organisation established under the Hospital Authority Ordinance (Cap.113) (the Ordinance) and is responsible for managing Hong Kong's public hospitals and relevant healthcare services. The HA Board is responsible for the corporate governance of the HA. The executives of the HA are authorised by the HA Board to manage and execute day-to-day operations of the HA and are accountable to the HA Board. The HA is in turn accountable to the Government through the Secretary for Health.

As a policy bureau, the Health Bureau (HHB) is responsible for formulating public healthcare policies, and developing public hospital facilities as well as providing subvention to the HA to offer subsidised public healthcare services in accordance with relevant policies. The HHB also plays a monitoring and supervisory role to ensure that the HA, as an independent and self-regulated statutory body, effectively performs its functions as stipulated under the Ordinance. The day-to-day management and operation of public hospitals are generally handled by the HA under its internal governance structure.

As a manifestation of the commitment of the Government and the HA in continuous improvement of the public healthcare system, the HA, as steered by the HHB, established a Review Committee on the Management of the Public Hospital System (Review Committee) on 2 July 2024 to conduct a comprehensive review of systemic issues. After thorough deliberations, the Review Committee consolidated its observations and made a total of 31 improvement recommendations in five areas, namely governance and accountability, safety culture, compliance and monitoring, incident management and enabling factors.

The HHB agreed to the direction of the 31 recommendations and relevant action plans recommended by the Review Committee, and has instructed the HA to implement the improvement measures in a timely manner while monitoring the progress and effectiveness of implementation on an ongoing basis, as well as to submit regular progress reports to the HHB. In addition, the HA has established a high-level Governance and Structure Reform Committee (Reform Committee) under the HA Board with the Chairman of the HA Board, Mr Henry Fan, chairing the Reform Committee to steer the implementation of the recommendations made in the review report regarding governance, accountability and distribution of responsibilities, and relevant reform work, with a view to ensuring that the public healthcare system can provide the public with healthcare services with quality, safety and effectiveness in a sustainable manner and meet today's community needs while ensuring our valuable healthcare resources are put to good use.

On 13 December 2024, the HHB and the HA reported to the Panel on Health Services the outcomes of the review on the public hospital management system, related recommended measures and action plans, as well as the reform work aiming to enhance the HA's governance and structure.

14 May 2021 meeting: Review of registration requirements of pharmaceutical products and discussion with the Mainland authorities on planning for joint procurement of drugs

Under the principle of “one country, two systems” and with the strong support of the country, Hong Kong has established a drug regulatory regime that is highly compatible with international standards, as well as an internationally recognised professional medical training system and an extensive and standardised medical data system.

To better leverage Hong Kong's medical strengths, “The Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address” announced that the Government will progress towards the long-term objective of establishing an authority that registers drugs and medical devices (medical products) under the “primary evaluation” approach, i.e. to directly approve applications for registration

of drugs and medical devices in Hong Kong based on clinical trial data without relying on registration approval from other drug regulatory authorities. This will help accelerate the clinical use of medical products to enhance the level of healthcare, foster the development of industries relating to the research, development and clinical trials of medical products, developing Hong Kong into an international health and medical innovation hub.

To achieve the long-term development of the authority that registers medical products under the “primary evaluation” approach, the “1+” mechanism announced in “The Chief Executive’s 2023 Policy Address” came into effect on 1 November 2023. Under the newly established “1+” mechanism, applications for registration of new drugs in Hong Kong, that are beneficial for treatment of life-threatening or severely debilitating diseases and are supported with local clinical data and scope of application recognised by local experts, are only required to submit approval from one reference drug regulatory authority (instead of two originally). Under the “1+” mechanism, the relevant requirements for local clinical data and recognition by experts for application for registration (i.e. the “+” under the “1+” mechanism) will continue to ensure that all drugs approved for registration fulfil the stringent requirements of safety, efficacy and quality. It will also strengthen the local capacity of drug evaluation and enhance the developments of relevant software, hardware and expertise. “The Chief Executive’s 2024 Policy Address” has further extended the “1+” approval mechanism to all new drugs, including vaccines and advanced therapy products, and optimised the approval mechanism to expedite registration, facilitating good drugs for use in Hong Kong.

The Government needs to give careful consideration to matters relating to the development of medical products (including the HA’s drug procurement strategy) in order to maintain an independent regulatory regime for medical products while not compromising Hong Kong’s institutional strengths, the long-term objective of establishing an authority that registers medical products under the “primary evaluation” approach, the future development of Hong Kong’s healthcare system and services, and the recognition of healthcare technologies and clinical research by both the Mainland and the international community.

In purchasing drugs for the provision of optimal treatment to patients, the HA attaches great importance to patients' safety with prime consideration on the safety and quality of drugs. The HA has put in place a robust drug procurement mechanism to purchase pharmaceutical products that meet the quality requirements through various channels, so as to ensure the safety, efficacy and quality of drugs and safeguard patients' health. Meanwhile, the HA has also introduced market competition through centralised tendering or quotation procedures to achieve economies of scale. As the HA's centralised bulk procurement covers all hospitals and clinics under its management, given the relatively large quantity of drugs purchased, the HA has a certain degree of bargaining power in negotiating drug prices with pharmaceutical companies.

The HA closely monitors market developments and maintains communication with different stakeholders to promote diversification of drug supply, with a view to achieving efficient and cost-effective use of resources. From time to time, the HA also conducts mutual visits and exchanges with relevant Mainland experts on issues of common concern, so as to facilitate the promotion of collaboration between and development of the two places through mutual learning of experience. The differences in drug registration systems, pricing mechanisms for pharmaceutical manufacturers, and customs mechanisms of drugs between Hong Kong and the Mainland mean that drug procurement procedures of the two places are not entirely compatible. It is important to ensure that the inherent strengths of Hong Kong's drug regulatory system are not compromised when considering the HA's drug procurement strategy.

Since the implementation of the "1+" mechanism, the HA has actively optimised the functions of various drug-related committees to shorten the time required for introducing new drugs, including them in the safety net or as Special drugs. The HA also encourages drug manufacturers or suppliers to apply for registration in Hong Kong for unregistered drugs that are in demand. Through the "1+" mechanism, the number of drugs successfully registered in Hong Kong will increase, providing patients and healthcare professionals with more choices of drugs.

10 March 2023 meeting: Implementation of five-day work week initiative in public hospitals

The HA has been encouraging clusters to implement five-day work week since 1 April 2007 with a view to enhancing staff's work life balance while maintaining the overall standard and efficiency of public healthcare services. The implementation of five-day work week, which is applicable to all staff groups, is subject to five basic principles - no additional manpower resources involved; no reduction in the stipulated work hours of employees; no reduction in emergency services; alternative service arrangements having minimal impact to the public; and availability of continued support to clinical areas. Five-day work week has been implemented in suitable departments of all hospitals.

In addition, in order to reduce the disparity between employees who are working in a five-day work pattern and those who are not, HA has implemented the "align leave taking arrangement" since 1 April 2012, i.e. if an employee takes vacation for a duration of seven consecutive days (i.e. one calendar week), regardless of the employee's duty pattern, he/she will be deemed to be working on five-day work week pattern for that particular week, and for which five days of annual leave or the actual number of working days in the week, whichever is the lesser, will be deducted from the employee's annual leave balance.

12 May 2023 meeting: Number of elderly persons returning to Hong Kong and queuing for HA's services

As the cornerstone and safety net of Hong Kong's healthcare system, the Government has been attaching great importance to public healthcare services to provide optimal medical care to Hong Kong citizens. At present, all holders of a valid Hong Kong Identity Card and children under 11 years of age who are Hong Kong residents are regarded as an Eligible Persons (EPs) for subsidised public healthcare services. There is no requirement for service users to ordinarily reside in Hong Kong. The HA does not collect information on whether individual patients ordinarily

reside in Hong Kong, nor does it compile statistics on the utilisation of public healthcare services by EPs who do not ordinarily reside in Hong Kong.

At present, we cannot ascertain the exact figures of EPs who previously moved to overseas and returned to Hong Kong for public healthcare services. The definition of EPs forms part of the policy of fees and charges for public healthcare services. When reviewing the relevant policy according to the related mechanisms, the Government and the HA will keep in view changes to the patterns of residents in moving to the Mainland or overseas, as well as make reference to the subsidisation policies of other public services and social welfare.

9 June 2023 meeting: Concrete spalling incident at the Castle Peak Hospital (CPH)

CPH reported the concrete spalling incident to the management of the New Territories West Cluster immediately after its occurrence. On the same day, CPH also reported the incident to the HA Head Office (HAHO) via the Advance Incident Reporting System. Meanwhile, to ensure the safety of patients and staff, CPH immediately adopted a series of measures to prevent re-occurrence of similar incidents.

Since no patients and staff were injured and CPH's inpatient service was not affected by the incident, the relevant cluster had reported the incident to the HAHO in accordance with the prevailing established procedures. According to the reporting arrangements established taking into account the varying nature and severity of incidents, the CPH's incident did not belong to category of incidents requiring immediate public disclosure.

The HA will continue to actively and seriously follow up on any issues related to hospital safety, and is committed to creating a safe environment for patients and healthcare staff by making improvements according to the recommendations given in the report of the Review Committee on Medical Equipment and Facility Maintenance.

17 November 2023 meeting: Continual participation of the contractor involved in the incident of falling surgical light at the United Christian Hospital (UCH) in tendering exercises after the incident

Considering the severity of the falling surgical light incident of the UCH and the performance of the contractor concerned, in particular the non-compliance of its service with the contract requirements leading to the occurrence of the said incident which had great impact on the safety of hospital services, the HA has adopted a host of disciplinary actions to vigorously pursue the liabilities of the contractor concerned, including:

1. The contractor is to make an open apology to the HA;
2. The contractor is to settle compensation to the HA for all losses and expenses incurred from the incident; and
3. The HA has excluded the contractor concerned from participation in tendering and quotation exercises for all ceiling-mount medical equipment since September 2023. This is to be in force for one year until September 2024. The HA will consider lifting the suspension from tendering only after the contractor's service performance has been reviewed and proven to fulfil the requirements.

In addition, the HA has also enhanced the existing tendering and quotation exercises by introducing a new marking scheme for purchasing medical equipment so as to strengthen the HA's monitoring of contractors' performance and to ensure the quality of tendering and quotation exercises. If the bidder's past performance is not satisfactory, such factor would be taken into account during the assessment of tenders and would affect the tender result.

The HA will continue to strengthen monitoring, enhance performance of medical equipment contractors and take proactive measures to ensure safety of patients and staff members.

8 November 2024 meeting: Number of HA staff receiving seasonal influenza vaccines and the vaccination rate in 2023/2024

The HA provided seasonal influenza vaccines for its staff starting from 21 September 2023 and the 2023/2024 Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programme ended on 31 July 2024. The HA administered thereunder influenza vaccination for 54 760 staff members with overall vaccination rate at 58%, which is 15% higher than the previous season. The vaccination rate of front-line healthcare staff reached 61%.