

Ceremony marks Organ Donation Day 2019 and 50th anniversary of first kidney transplant in Hong Kong

The Food and Health Bureau, the Department of Health (DH) and Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) held a ceremony today (November 9) to celebrate Organ Donation Day 2019 and the 50th anniversary of the first kidney transplant in Hong Kong.

Speaking at the ceremony, the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, said that the Government has been making continuous efforts to promote organ donation. Following the establishment in 2016 of the Committee on Promotion of Organ Donation, which aims to co-ordinate and integrate the relevant work by various departments and organisations, the number of registrations recorded in the Centralised Organ Donation Register (CODR) (www.codr.gov.hk) has increased from less than 200 000 to more than 310 000 in three years.

"Organ transplants may offer the only hope for some patients suffering from organ failure. Due to the limited supply of transplantable organs from donation, more than 2 000 patients are waiting for organ transplants in Hong Kong every day. Many of them may pass away before the right organ match comes," Professor Chan said.

She encouraged members of the public to put words into actions by signing up in the CODR and telling family members about their wishes for organ donation, so as to enable more patients to live on through organ transplants.

Also attending the ceremony, the Director of Health, Dr Constance Chan, said that more than 580 companies, organisations and schools have pledged to promote the culture of organ donation internally and in the community by signing the Organ Donation Promotion Charter since its launch in 2016. She expressed her gratitude to the institutions and organisations for their support in promoting organ donation over the years, and called on different sectors in society to continue to collaborate with the DH in promoting and fostering a positive culture of organ donation in Hong Kong.

Dr Chan added that, since early this year, the DH has set up booths at the Hong Kong Island and West Kowloon Smart Identity Card Replacement Centres of the Immigration Department, and sent colleagues to other Smart Identity Card Replacement Centres, to call for support from the general public and assist them to register in the CODR on-site.

In commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the first kidney transplant in Hong Kong, the chief surgeon of the operation conducted in 1969, Dr Leong Che-hung, was invited to attend the ceremony. Dr Leong recalled that, 50

years ago, the general public had limited knowledge on organ transplants. Many of them had a strong traditional mindset of keeping the body intact after death.

"Owing to medical advancements in the past 50 years, many challenges in the past can now be overcome. Despite this, in order for patients in need of organ transplants to live on, we need each and every one of us to support organ donation and register our wish to donate organs," Dr Leong said.

At the ceremony, Organ Donation Promotion Ambassador and athlete Stephanie Au and Organ Donation Day 2019 Ambassador and artiste Alfred Hui shared their views with the audience and pledged to assist in spreading the message of supporting organ donation to every corner of society. Other guests, including organ recipients, a patient waiting for an organ transplant and an Organ Donation Coordinator, also spoke on their experiences with the audience, so as to convey to the public the message that organ donation not only helps patients in need but also their families.

The Government has designated the second Saturday of November every year as Organ Donation Day. To tie in with the celebration, the DH's organ donation promotion vehicle will visit different locations across the territory this month and in December to raise the public's awareness on organ donation with fun educational games, as well as call for registration in the CODR. In addition, interviews and programmes with messages on organ donation will be aired on Radio 1, Radio 5 and the Putonghua Channel of RTHK from this month onwards.

For more information on organ donation, members of the public may visit the DH's thematic website (www.organdonation.gov.hk). They are also invited to "like" and follow the DH's Organ Donation@HK Facebook page (www.fb.com/organdonationhkeng) for the latest information.