

Chinese medicine further engaged in anti-epidemic treatment

The Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, visited the Community Treatment Facility (CTF) at AsiaWorld-Expo today (February 11) to learn more about the operation of the special Chinese medicine (CM) services provided by the Hospital Authority (HA) for COVID-19 patients staying in the CTF.

Accompanied by the Chairman of the HA, Mr Henry Fan, and the Chief Executive of the HA, Dr Tony Ko, Professor Chan visited the working area dedicated for CM services in the CTF, met the resident Chinese Medicine Practitioners (CMPs) and Western medicine (WM) team, and was briefed on the arrangement and workflow of the service, etc. Furthermore, Professor Chan also spoke with patients receiving CM services through video calls, to gauge their views on the service.

"The Government has all along been committed to promoting in Hong Kong the development of CM which has been incorporated into the healthcare system of Hong Kong. With the facilitation and support of the Food and Health Bureau, the HA is providing CM services to patients in the CTF. Not only does it provide patients with another option of treatment, it also allows CM to give full play to its strength in our anti-epidemic control efforts. I would like to thank the participating CMPs and members of the Expert Panel for their support in launching the services," Professor Chan said.

Since January 26, the HA has provided the Special Chinese Medicine Programme for COVID-19 In-patients (In-patient Programme) at the CTF through the tripartite Chinese Medicine Clinic cum Training and Research Centres (CMCTRs). Fifty patients have joined so far, with more than 230 consultations conducted.

Patients' participation in the In-patient Programme is voluntary. Patients are clinically assessed by the WM and CM teams to confirm the suitability of receiving treatment under the In-patient Programme. The HA also set up an Expert Panel comprising CM experts in the area of clinical practice and drugs from the schools of Chinese medicine of three local universities, together with medicine, infectious diseases and toxicology experts from the HA, to formulate the clinical protocol for the In-patient Programme.

Having regard to the clinical operation mode and infection control measures of the CTF, resident CMPs provide consultation services in non-isolation areas via video calls. CMPs will prescribe CM medication according to the clinical protocols promulgated by the Expert Panel. After the first consultation, CMPs will arrange follow-up consultations and treatment according to clinical needs.

"Discharged patients may also join the Special Chinese Medicine Out-patient Programme for Discharged COVID-19 Patients (Out-patient Programme) to receive follow-up rehabilitation treatment. Over 850 discharged patients have joined the Out-patient Programme since its launch in April last year," Professor Chan added.

All eligible persons who have been discharged from public hospitals after COVID-19 treatment can enrol in the Out-patient Programme to receive 10 free sessions of CM general consultation services in the 11 participating CMCTRs. For details of the Out-patient Programme, please contact the CM Department of the HA (Tel: 2794 3068) or visit the HA CM KINETics (CMK) website at cmk.ha.org.hk.

"Since the emergence of the epidemic, the Government has all along been maintaining close liaison with the CM sector to jointly work for the prevention and control of COVID-19. I am pleased that the CM sector is committed to promoting CM anti-epidemic knowledge to the public, with a view to encouraging the latter to put into practice the CM concept of preventive medicine in their daily lives," Professor Chan said.

The Government has been providing the latest information and guidelines in relation to the epidemic development to the CMPs. To enhance the role of the CM sector in the anti-epidemic efforts, the Government has included the "Novel Coronavirus Epidemic Related Projects" in the Chinese Medicine Development Fund (the Fund) as a priority area, to support related training, research and promotion projects. The scope of the "CM Clinic Improvement Funding Scheme" under the Fund has also been expanded to subsidise CM clinics to upgrade their infection control facilities. The Government will continue to provide support to the CM sector in order to give full play to the strengths of CM.