

COVID-19 Vaccination Programme healthcare services arrangements

The Government announced the latest information regarding arrangements of healthcare services of the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme (Vaccination Programme).

With the Sinovac vaccine's debut arrival in Hong Kong, the Vaccination Programme arranged by the Government will start receiving bookings online from February 23 for members of the public who are in the priority groups to receive the Sinovac vaccine at five Community Vaccination Centres (CVCs) and 18 General Out-patient Clinics (GOPCs) under the Hospital Authority (HA) starting from February 26. It is also expected that private doctors who participate in the Vaccination Programme can start providing the administration of Sinovac vaccine to members of the public before mid-March. To tie in with the arrival of the Fosun Pharma/BioNTech vaccine which will arrive shortly in end-February, more CVCs will gradually commence operations.

CVCs

The Government will set up 29 CVCs in Hong Kong to provide vaccination services for citizens who have made bookings through the Government online booking system. The first five CVCs to commence operations will provide the Sinovac vaccine while the 24 CVCs which will subsequently commence operations are planned to provide the Fosun Pharma/BioNTech vaccine. To mobilise sufficient medical manpower to support the smooth operations of the many CVCs, the Government will partner with the HA and a number of healthcare professional bodies, medical organisations and private hospitals (collectively as "partner healthcare organisations" thereafter) to take charge of the medical-related tasks at the CVCs. The partner healthcare organisations participating in the operation of the CVCs must be of a certain scale with medical network, ability to mobilise staff as well as resources. The Government had earlier issued invitations to 40-plus healthcare organisations which meet the aforesaid criteria (not including public medical organisations) and chose the partner healthcare organisations out of the 17 proposals received. The locations, number of vaccination booths and partner healthcare organisations for operating the 29 CVCs are stated at Annex1.

Regarding the operational arrangements at the CVCs, the Government will be responsible for the booking, registration, waiting, management, venue, ancillary facilities, equipment and consumables, etc for the CVCs, as well as the storage of the vaccines and arranging sufficient doses for vaccination. The partner healthcare organisation will provide the medical staff to administer the vaccines for members of the public and also handle medical-related tasks, including dilution of the vaccines (if applicable), providing emergency medical services, explaining medical information and handling of enquiries, as well as the medical support at the vaccination

booths and resting areas, etc. During opening hours, a CVC must have one doctor-in-charge and one registered nurse with emergency care training on site, so as to provide overall supervision and emergency management. Furthermore, the partner healthcare organisation also needs to mobilise a medical team comprising doctors, registered nurses, enrolled nurses or other registered healthcare professionals or healthcare workers with relevant training to handle tasks related to vaccination. Generally speaking, it is expected that a CVC with 15 booths can provide around 2 500 doses of vaccines on a daily basis at maximum throughput.

To support the above arrangement, the Government will provide the partner healthcare organisation a subsidy of \$72 per dose of vaccine (not including public medical organisations viz. the HA and Department of Health (DH)). The relevant subsidy amount has made reference to the DH's current Vaccination Subsidy Scheme and took into account the fact that the venue and related ancillary facilities, etc are provided by the Government. Having considered that a basic number of staff is need on site at the CVCs regardless of the number of doses administered by the partner healthcare organisation, the Government will provide a "Basic Subsidy Amount", which is calculated on the basis of one third of the maximum subsidy amount per day. In other words, if a CVC administers 2 500 doses of vaccines per day, the maximum subsidy amount will be \$180,000, whereas the "Basic Subsidy Amount" per day will be \$60,000.

Private Clinics

Apart from providing vaccination services of Sinovac and Fosun Pharma/BioNTech vaccines at CVCs, the Government will also provide the Sinovac vaccine to members of the public at over 1 500 clinics operated by over 1 200 private doctors who participate in the Vaccination Programme. The list of participating private doctors and clinics will be uploaded to the designated website of the Vaccination Programme later. Members of the public can choose a private doctor or clinic under the Vaccination Programme, and make an appointment for vaccination direct with the private doctor or clinic without going through the Government online booking system designated for the CVCs and public clinics. Private clinics participating in the Vaccination Programme must ensure that the storage requirements of the relevant vaccine are met, including that the relevant fridge can maintain a stable and suitable temperature and equipment is available to continuously monitor the temperature of the fridge.

The DH will host a briefing on February 23 for participating private doctors on the concrete details of the Vaccination Programme, including that each private doctor will be allocated a certain number of doses of the Sinovac vaccine at the onset. After the first batch of doses was used, the private doctors may make orders according to their needs. The DH will centrally coordinate the delivery of the vaccines and follow up on the usage situation, having regard to the private doctors' use of the vaccines and the supply. The DH will reserve the second dose for citizens at the same clinic where they received their first dose. Hence, private doctors should remind and actively follow up with the citizens to receive the second dose on schedule.

Healthcare staff at CVCs, private doctors and the relevant healthcare staff at their clinics must participate in a free training course provided by the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine. Private doctors will receive a subsidy of \$80 per dose of vaccine administered to members of the public. If the same private doctor/clinic completes the administration of two doses of vaccine for the same citizen, an additional subsidy of \$40 will be given. Private doctors cannot charge members of the public any extra fees for vaccination under the Vaccination Programme.

Clinics of the HA and DH

The 18 GOPCs under the HA will also provide the Sinovac vaccine. Members of the public can book the time for receiving the two doses of the vaccine via the Government online booking system. The list of GOPCs providing COVID-19 vaccination service is at Annex 2.

The DH will also provide the Sinovac vaccine to patients or citizens receiving services at DH's designated clinics, including Elderly Health Centres, Chest Clinics, Social Hygiene Clinics, Dermatological Clinics, Education and Training Centres in Family Medicine and Integrated Treatment Centres, etc. Members of the public who are in the priority groups and receiving services at the above DH clinics can make an appointment at the relevant clinic to receive vaccination there. Booking for vaccination services at DH clinics is not opened to the public.

To facilitate members of the public in keeping their vaccination records, in addition to a hard copy, their vaccination records will also be kept in electronic format. Members of the public can subsequently view their vaccination records via the website (www.evt.gov.hk) developed by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer for travel and other community purposes in the future. The Government also encourages members of the public to join the Electronic Health Record Sharing System (eHRSS). The eHRSS is an electronic platform developed by the Government. The medical records and vaccination records of its participants will be saved in encrypted files. With the participants' informed consent, there can be two-way sharing of their vaccination and medical records between medical organisations in the public and private sectors and hence facilitate the Government to strengthen the pharmacovigilance system to further ensure the safety of the vaccines.

The Government spokesman said, "Vaccination is a top priority of the anti-epidemic measures. Members of the public are encouraged to fight the virus by getting vaccinated early so as to enable Hong Kong to overcome the pandemic completely as soon as possible. For information about the vaccination, please visit the designated website at www.covidvaccine.gov.hk."