

Family doctors play important role in prevention and control of non-communicable diseases

In support of World Family Doctor Day this Saturday (May 19), the Department of Health (DH) today (May 16) called on the public to recognise the crucial role of family doctors in delivering primary care and safeguarding the health of the community, particularly in the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

World Family Doctor Day has been celebrated annually by the World Organization of Family Doctors since 2010 to give recognition to the role and contribution of family doctors in healthcare systems around the world. The theme this year is "Family doctors – leading the way to better health".

"Family doctors, as the first point of contact for individuals and families in the healthcare process, are the main provider of primary care, which is the first level of care in the whole healthcare system. They provide comprehensive, continuing, whole-person, co-ordinated and preventive care to individuals and their families to ensure their physical, psychological and social well-being. They also play a key role in the prevention and control of diseases including NCDs," a spokesman for the DH said.

In Hong Kong, five major NCDs, namely cancers, cardiovascular diseases including heart diseases and stroke, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases accounted for about 55 per cent of all registered deaths in 2016. To curb the burden of NCDs, the Government has recently launched "Towards 2025: Strategy and Action Plan to Prevent and Control Non-communicable Diseases in Hong Kong" (SAP), which defines nine local health targets to be achieved by 2025.

"One of the initiatives in the SAP is to strengthen the health system at all levels, in particular comprehensive primary care for prevention, early detection and management of NCDs based on the family doctor model," the spokesman added.

To tie in with the annual World Family Doctor Day and further promote the concept of family doctors, the DH and Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK), with support from the Hong Kong College of Family Physicians, have jointly produced a five-episode television programme, "My Family Doctor 3", which will be premiered on World Family Doctor Day on May 19.

The drama series features the important role of family doctors in assisting patients to quit smoking and alcohol drinking to prevent diseases, as well as early detection of NCDs including colorectal cancer. It also covers other health topics including food allergies, mood problems and sexually transmitted diseases. The programme will be broadcast on RTHK

Channel 31 at 9.30pm to 10pm every Saturday from May 19 to June 16, and on TVB Jade at 6pm to 6.30pm every Tuesday from May 22 to June 19.

To assist the public to search for primary care providers, the DH since 2011 has set up the Primary Care Directory (www.familydoctor.gov.hk) under which sub-directories of family doctors, dentists and Chinese medicine practitioners are currently available. For more information on the concept of family doctors and primary care, please visit the website of the Primary Care Office of the DH (www.pco.gov.hk).