

Greater Bay Area International Clinical Trial Institute officially opened in Hong Kong Park of Hetao Shenzhen-Hong Kong Science and Technology Innovation Co-operation Zone

The Greater Bay Area International Clinical Trial Institute (GBAICTI), established and wholly owned by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government, was officially opened today (November 21) in the Hong Kong Park of the Hetao Shenzhen-Hong Kong Science and Technology Innovation Co-operation Zone (HTCZ). The Greater Bay Area International Clinical Trials Center of the Shenzhen Municipality was also officially opened in the Shenzhen Park on the same day. The establishment of "one institute, one center" marked the first benchmark for co-ordinated development under "one zone, two parks" of the HTCZ.

The Deputy Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Cheuk Wing-hing; the Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau; Deputy Director of the Public Hygiene and Health Commission of Shenzhen Municipality Mr Li Jieyun; and the Vice-President and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Health), Dean of Medicine of the University of Hong Kong (HKU) and representative of the GBAICTI's operator, Professor Lau Chak-sing, officiated at the opening ceremony of the GBAICTI.

Mr Cheuk said that the National 14th Five-Year Plan indicated clear support to develop Hong Kong into an international innovation and technology hub. The Development Plan for Shenzhen Park of Hetao Shenzhen-Hong Kong Science and Technology Innovation Co-operation Zone also expressed staunch support for the co-ordinated development of technological innovation of Shenzhen and Hong Kong. With its strategic location in the Hetao area, the GBAICTI officially opened today will bring into full play Hong Kong's unique advantages of a high degree of internationalisation, high-level healthcare professions and scientific research. Joining hands with the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), the GBAICTI will spare no effort to develop new quality productive forces tailored to local conditions by promoting clinical trials and development of the biomedical technologies industry, hence serving the nation's needs with the strengths of Hong Kong.

The Director General of the Public Hygiene and Health Commission of Shenzhen Municipality, Ms Wu Hongyan, in her video speech congratulated on the official establishment of the GBAICTI in Hong Kong, and expressed her hope for close integration between Hong Kong and Shenzhen to capitalise on the strengths of the two places in the areas of industry, translation, market, talent and scientific research through the establishment of "one institute, one center", building together a high-level clinical trial service

platform.

The GBAICTI will co-ordinate clinical trial resources in local public and private sectors, including those from the Hospital Authority (HA), private healthcare institutions and universities, serving as a one-stop clinical trial support platform for medical research institutions while streamlining workflow, driving training for talent and collaboration across the GBA on all fronts. Multiple projects will be rolled out in phases, including establishing the Hong Kong Clinical Trial Digital Portal, founding the Clinical Trial Academy, collaborating with the Department of Health (DH) and the HA to have the time for approval and application of drugs reduced to a level with competitiveness in the world. At the same time, the GBAICTI will establish strategic partnerships with healthcare and biomedical institutions, including the Hong Kong Genome Institute, to leverage its genome database primarily acquired from the Southern Chinese population, spur the opening up of the HA's medical databases to support clinical trials, and attract enterprises of advanced biomedical technologies (such as gene therapy, cell therapy, radioligand therapy and new vaccine technology platforms) within and outside of Hong Kong to set up their operations in Hetao for research and development (R&D), and translation.

The GBAICTI will be a key hub for clinical trial network co-operation between Hong Kong and the Mainland. The GBAICTI will establish the GBA Clinical Trial Collaboration Platform under the "one zone, two parks" model together with the Greater Bay Area International Clinical Trials Center, which was officially opened today in the Shenzhen Park under the operation of the Shenzhen Medical Academy of Research and Translation, to extend the research and development network and expedite clinical trials. With a population base of over 86 million within the GBA, the platform will provide support to medical research institutions within and outside Hong Kong and co-ordinate the launch of multicentre cross-boundary clinical trials that can meet both national and international standards.

Through open tender, The HKSAR Government has designated the LKS Faculty of Medicine of the HKU, which has extensive international experiences in clinical trials, to operate the GBAICTI. The temporary office of the GBAICTI is located at the Central Government-Aided Emergency Hospital in the Hetao area, covering nearly 7 000 square feet and equipped with an affiliated biobank managed by the HA and the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). Having two liquid nitrogen storage systems and 11 ultra-low temperature freezers set up, the biobank has a capacity to store over 400 000 samples (such as tissues, blood, cells and DNA).

In the days to come, the GBAICTI is expected to move into one of the wet laboratory-enabled buildings in the Hong Kong Park (i.e. the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park) to provide a platform with more diverse and comprehensive clinical trial facilities and services. The GBAICTI will have a better integration with the complete biomedical technologies R&D and technology industry chain in the GBA, and capitalise on the nation's special policy initiatives that are favourable to Hong Kong, such as the measure of using Hong Kong-registered drugs and medical devices used in Hong Kong public hospitals in the GBA and relevant cross-boundary facilitation

measures. That will help Hong Kong to fully leverage its role as a "super connector" enjoying strong support of the Motherland and being closely connected to the world, and promote the Hetao area as a window for translation of innovative biomedical research results to attract overseas enterprises and facilitate Mainland enterprises to go global, thus expediting patients' access to advanced treatments in the GBA and promoting new quality productive forces.

Also attending today's opening ceremony were the Permanent Secretary for Health and Director of the GBAICTI Limited, Mr Thomas Chan; the Under Secretary for Health, Dr Libby Lee; the Chairman of the HA, Mr Henry Fan; the Chief Executive of the HA, Dr Tony Ko; and the Acting Dean of the Faculty of Medicine of the CUHK, Professor Allen Chan.