

# HA adjusts service provision to focus on combatting epidemic

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The Hospital Authority (HA) today (February 10) announced that it planned to adjust public hospital non-emergency services and non-essential services gradually in the coming four weeks to focus manpower and resources in light of the challenge of the epidemic.

The HA Central Command Committee reviewed the latest epidemic situation and decided that public hospital services need to be adjusted to focus on emergency and essential services, including the management of the epidemic and other urgent clinical services.

HA Chief Manager (Cluster Performance) Dr Ian Cheung said, "The next few weeks will be the critical time for the fight against the novel coronavirus. Service curtailment can reduce the flow of people in the hospitals and reduce the risk of cross infection. It will also allow healthcare staff to focus on the epidemic and strengthen the implementation of infection control measures."

"The specialist outpatient clinics (SOPCs) of public hospital will gradually reduce the services. For instance, Ear, Nose and Throat specialty will provide consultations only to post operation follow up and cancer cases required surveillance. SOPCs will contact patients with stable condition and mild illnesses to reschedule the appointments and arrange drug refill," Dr Cheung said.

"Emergency surgery services will be maintained. Elective surgeries will be postponed except for essential surgeries for cancer treatment. Appointments for non-emergency and routine clinical examinations such as endoscopy and gastroscopy will also be rescheduled."

At the same time, the HA is also discussing with several private hospitals on various Public-Private Partnership Programmes. Public hospitals will divert patients from public hospitals for treatment in private hospitals at the current fees charged by public hospitals. Initial agreement has been reached in the provision of neonatal jaundice treatment.

Dr Cheung hopes the public could be emphatic towards the need for the service adjustment arrangements and apologises to the affected patients.