

# HA appeals for public understanding for surge in demand

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

Latest statistics indicated that demand for public hospital services is still on the high side amid the current winter surge in public hospitals. The spokesperson for Hospital Authority (HA) today (19 March) appealed to members of the public for their understanding on the longer waiting time at the Accident and Emergency (A&E) Departments and the crowdedness in wards, and to co-operate with the hospitals for transfer or discharge arrangements.

The HA Chief Manager (Cluster Performance), Dr Ian Cheung said that although the seasonal influenza activity has steadily decreased according to the latest surveillance data by the Centre of Health Protection, the A&E attendances suddenly surged in the past two days. "The A&E attendances surged to 7 038 on Monday, a record high of this winter, alongside over 1 100 admissions to medical wards."

"As the occupancies of medical wards have already been saturated in various hospitals, some patients may need to wait in the A&E Departments for some time before admission. I appeal for patients and their family members' understanding while awaiting admission and being monitored by A&E staff. Meanwhile, the healthcare staff in the A&E Departments have to accord priority to treat patients with severe conditions and monitor patients waiting for admission. This has led to longer waiting time for semi-urgent and non-urgent patients. Non-urgent patients are advised to consider seeking consultation at general out-patient clinics or private doctors."

In addition, over 1,800 beds have already been added to cope with the demand surge and the medical wards in various hospitals are very crowded. Dr Cheung appealed for patients' co-operation with healthcare staff in transfer and discharge arrangements according to their clinical conditions, so that the wards can vacate the hospital beds for other patients in need.

Lastly, Dr Cheung would like to express his gratitude once again to all frontline staff for their commitment and dedication in taking care of the patients.

HA continues to release the key service statistics of the A&E Departments and the occupancy rate in public hospitals. Details are in the appended table.