

HA Chinese New Year special measures help public hospitals operate smoothly

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The Hospital Authority (HA) announced today (February 21) that various special measures implemented during the Chinese New Year (CNY) helped to cope with the service demand surge and alleviate the service pressure on the Accident and Emergency (A&E) Departments. The operations of public hospitals were generally maintained smoothly.

The special measures included strengthening manpower, opening temporary beds and mobilising hospital beds flexibly, enhancing support for the discharge process and expediting the turnover of beds. In addition, 18 General Outpatient Clinics (GOPCs) and Chinese Medicine Clinics cum Training and Research Centres (CMCTRs) located in the 18 districts were specially opened during the CNY holidays, providing a total of 8 000 quotas and 1 800 quotas respectively.

In addition, in order to minimise the impact of service demand surge on the public healthcare system, the Health Bureau has collated information of private hospitals, healthcare facilities, family doctors and Chinese medicine clinics that were in operation during the CNY holidays across the city. The information (including addresses, phone numbers and operation hours) of the relevant hospitals and clinics have been uploaded to an [online portal](#) for public reference in collaboration with the Spatial Data Office of the Development Bureau and the Lands Department. Such a move aims to enable citizens in need to look for suitable hospitals or clinics for medical treatment.

Data from the HA shows that during the CNY, the quota utilisation rate of GOPCs rose from about 80 per cent on the first day (February 10) of the CNY to more than 90 per cent on the second to fourth day (February 11 to 13) of the CNY, while the quota utilisation rate of CMCTRs was about 80 per cent, showing that the additional service capacity in the CNY of GOPCs and CMCTRs was able to meet the needs of the public.

Regarding the operation of A&E Departments, from February 9 to 18, more than 53 200 attendances were recorded in A&E Departments, representing an increase of about 27 per cent when compared with around 41 800 attendances recorded during the same period of the CNY last year (from CNY's Eve to the ninth day of the CNY).

During this period, the A&E first attendance in public hospitals ranged from about 4 000 to about 6 200 daily, with the peak concentrating on the fourth and the fifth day (February 13 and 14) of the CNY. Overall, the proportion of semi-urgent (Triage IV) and non-urgent (Triage V) patients decreased as compared with previous years, allowing the A&E Departments to

allocate manpower and resources to take care of patients with more urgent conditions.

In addition, the special refund arrangement implemented to cope with the increased service volume in the A&E Departments of public hospitals has concluded. From February 9 to 18, 1 032 applications for refund have so far been received, accounting for around 1.9 per cent of the total number of attendances, with the majority of them being patients in stable condition. The applications are currently under process, and eligible applicants will be refunded by cheque sent via mail or by credit card.

The spokesman stressed, "The operation of the special refund arrangement has been smooth, allowing stable and less severe patients to have more flexibility in choosing alternative healthcare arrangements, such as seeking consultation at other medical institutions, thus diverting patients and alleviating the service pressure on A&E Departments, enabling them to concentrate resources of taking care of patients in need."

"Although the number of patient attendance increased as compared to normal days, the operation of all public hospitals remained smooth during this period after the implementation of the above special measures, and the overall pressure on public hospitals was alleviated. In particular, the waiting time for patients admitted to the wards through the A&E Departments has been reduced. However, the HA noted that some patients did not show up after making appointments at GOPCs and CMCTRs. The HA appeals to patients to cancel their appointments if consultation service is not in need due to other arrangements, so that patients in need can receive medical services more easily and in a timely manner.

"The HA is thankful for the understanding of patients and also the dedicated healthcare staff taking care of patients with their best efforts during the CNY, which enabled the emergency services of A&E Departments in public hospitals to remain smooth. The HA will continue to monitor the service statistics of public hospitals, and summarise the experience gained from implementing special measures this time and feedback received from different stakeholders, so as to help implement appropriate measures in the future, so that A&E Department resources can be used for citizens who are most in need of healthcare services."

Moreover, recent surveillance data shows that the local COVID-19 and influenza activity has increased. The HA appeals to members of the public to get vaccinated early for COVID-19 and seasonal influenza, especially high-risk groups, to reduce the chance of getting infected for themselves and their family members, as well as to reduce critical cases and deaths. Regardless of the number of doses received previously, high-risk groups are recommended to receive a dose of COVID-19 vaccine at least six months since the last dose or infection.

Members of the public may find details on the Centre for Health Protection COVID-19 Vaccination Programme website (www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/106934.html) and the Vaccination Schemes website

(www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/17980.html).