

HA responds to an online article on non-locally trained doctors

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

Regarding a recent online commentary on the "Medical Registration (Amendment) Bill 2021" (the Bill), the Hospital Authority (HA) spokesperson responded as follows today (May 27):

The HA welcomes the Government's earlier announcement on submission to the Legislative Council of the Bill on June 2 to introduce a new pathway for non-locally trained Hong Kong doctors to return to Hong Kong and serve the community.

With the limited number of training places in local medical schools, non-locally trained doctors had always been an important source of practising doctors in Hong Kong before 1997, accounting for about 50 per cent of the newly registered doctors each year. In recent years, the two local universities have progressively increased the intake of medical students, and the HA has also recruited all suitable medical graduates from local universities. However, with the ageing population and the rising service demand, the supply of medical graduates still falls short of the demand in Hong Kong.

The Bill stipulated that applicants for special registration must be permanent residents of Hong Kong. The purpose of the Bill is to attract non-locally trained doctors, who are Hong Kong permanent residents, to return to Hong Kong and serve for a specific period of time in the public healthcare sector.

The commentary stated that the purpose of the Bill is to introduce mainland doctors, which is purely speculative, arouses undue conflicts and misleads the public.

In addition, the HA will continue to collaborate with the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine to facilitate non-locally trained doctors to receive their specialist training while working in Hong Kong. The HA will also assess their job performance for the five years following the attainment of their specialist qualification and acknowledge their competence as doctors, before the doctors can apply for a full registration.

In comparison, locally trained doctors can obtain full registration after completing a one-year internship. The government is actually imposing a higher requirement for non-locally-trained doctors. By serving in the public healthcare sector for an extended period of time, these doctors will definitely help relieve the workload of frontline doctors.

The HA has always been very concerned about the manpower situation of doctors in public hospitals and has implemented various human resources

measures, including the recruitment of full-time and part-time healthcare staff, increasing promotion opportunities and strengthening training for doctors, and continuing the Special Retired and Rehire Scheme, in order to increase and retain doctors' manpower, meet service demand and alleviate the workload of front-line doctors.

Amid the ageing population and rising demand for healthcare services, the HA trusted that the Government's proposed plan can increase and stabilise the supply of medical talents for Hong Kong. It is hoped that the profession can be more liberal in the deliberation to improve the proposal.