

Health Bureau responds to media enquiries on hospital development plans and cluster delineation

In response to media enquiries on hospital development plans and cluster delineation, a spokesman for the Health Bureau gave the following response today (December 10):

The Hospital Authority (HA) plans and develops various public healthcare services on a cluster basis, taking into account a number of factors, including the changes in service demand arising from population growth and demographic changes, rising prevalence of chronic diseases, healthcare technology advancement, healthcare manpower supply as well as service arrangements of the clusters. At present, there are a total of 14 public hospitals and healthcare institutions in the Hong Kong East and Hong Kong West Clusters, with five of those hospitals treating acute or complex illnesses, namely Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital, Ruttonjee Hospital, Queen Mary Hospital, Grantham Hospital and St. John Hospital.

The Health Bureau is currently working with the HA in reviewing the prioritisation of the hospital development projects in various districts across the city under the Second Hospital Development Plan (HDP), with reference to fundamental factors including the city-wide future planning by the Planning Department (including the Northern Metropolis and other development concepts set out in the "Hong Kong 2030+: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030"), the latest population statistics and projection data of the Census and Statistics Department, anticipated population distribution and demographics, and estimated healthcare services demand, while considering the supply and status of the sites for healthcare facilities, need and cost-effectiveness of renovation, refurbishment, redevelopment or addition of facilities of individual hospitals, and ease of patient in accessing the healthcare facilities, etc.

Meanwhile, the HA is reviewing and planning the service provision of hospital clusters, including the delineation of hospital clusters as well as positioning and roles of hospitals, having regard to the anticipated changes in population distribution and demographics. In particular, the operation of hospitals in each cluster should be rationalised and supplementary to one another such that the relevant hospitals can offer the community comprehensive and complementary services in a co-ordinated manner, including ensuring that the Accident and Emergency departments are located within a reasonable distance from their respective service areas, while striving to optimise the overall service arrangements. The hospital development projects under the HDP will dovetail with long-term planning made by the HA for its healthcare services, including strategic plans and clinical service plans.

In respect of the Hong Kong Island region, according to the future population projections by the Census and Statistics Department, in spite of

an anticipated increase in the overall population by 2041, the population of the Hong Kong Island region would drop slightly, while the proportion of elderly persons aged 65 or above would increase in the light of an ageing population. The Health Bureau and the HA are projecting future local service demand in accordance with the aforementioned projections, in order to review and plan the hospital development projects under the Second HDP in the region. The HA is also reviewing and planning the service provisions as well as the role delineation and distribution of various hospitals in the region to provide a basis of reference for the HDP.

Taking into consideration the population served by a cluster in general, the consolidation of the services of the entire Hong Kong Island into one cluster is one of the study directions. It is expected that, under the consolidated cluster, the existing hospitals treating acute or complex illnesses in the region will all be retained with their functions of treating acute or complex illnesses maintained, thus this will not, for common illnesses, cause citizens to travel to another district for medical consultations or visit to patients. This option will also reduce relevant administrative cost and facilitate service co-ordination, thereby enhancing cost effectiveness. The HA will, having regard to estimated local needs, optimise service distribution and suitably increase the number of beds and relevant healthcare facilities, while the Health Bureau will work with the HA to formulate hospital development projects under the HDP with reference to the relevant arrangements.

Upon completion of the review, the Government will announce the details of the Second HDP in due course.