

# Hospital Authority continues to transfer patients to private hospitals

The COVID-19 epidemic situation remains severe. Apart from continuing to transfer inpatients to private hospitals, the Hospital Authority (HA) has been actively transferring patients who do not need to occupy hospital beds to receive medical services at private hospitals, with a view to maintaining the effective operation of the public healthcare system through more flexible means.

Although the number of daily new cases of Hong Kong has shown signs of decline, citizens might have participated in more frequent social gatherings during the previous Mid-Autumn Festival holidays. The epidemic development still requires prudent monitoring, and the number of hospitalised patients in public hospitals may stay high in the short term. The HA will continue to arrange suitable inpatients and other patients (e.g. users of non-emergency services) to receive medical services at private hospitals, thereby allowing different patients to receive treatment as early as practicable on the premise of alleviating the burden on the public healthcare system.

Following an earlier meeting between the Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, and the representatives of the Hong Kong Private Hospitals Association, all 13 private hospitals provided 364 beds at the initial stage, of which the number can be gradually brought up to around 1 000 depending on the actual demand. Upon recent liaison between the HA and private hospitals, 423 hospital beds have now been made available (see Annex). In particular, Hong Kong Adventist Hospital – Tsuen Wan and CUHK Medical Centre have further deployed more beds, with the former planning to provide additional hospital beds this week for receiving more HA patients.

Should the epidemic subsequently subside, the occupancy rate of relevant hospital beds may decrease accordingly. The HA will maintain its close liaison with private hospitals to adjust the number of hospital beds which private hospitals need to provide. Furthermore, some private hospitals have been actively participating in the anti-epidemic initiatives under the Public-Private Partnership of the HA, such as offering medical support in holding centres, as well as providing teleconsultation and drug delivery services to COVID-19 patients such that patients in need may obtain the antiviral drugs as early as possible.

Professor Lo said, “I wish to express my gratitude to various private hospitals for having successively allocated more beds to handle more transfer cases. At the same time, by offering medical services to patients from public hospitals who do not need to occupy hospital beds, private hospitals have assisted in mitigating the impact brought by HA’s adjustment of non-emergency services to combat the epidemic. I hope that private hospitals will continue their active collaboration with the HA, and urge patients and their family members to co-operate with the arrangement.”

The HA reiterated that public hospitals will conduct a professional evaluation to ensure that a patient is suitable for transfer to private hospitals before making the arrangement. Patients only need to pay at a level equivalent to the charges of HA services for their stay at the private hospitals or usage of medical services specified in the transfer arrangement. For those patients who are eligible for medical fee waiver, they will still be able to enjoy such waiver as in the case of using HA services.