

Hospital Authority strives to enhance safety of medical equipment and facilities

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The Hospital Authority (HA) announced today (June 7) the report of the Review Committee on Medical Equipment and Facility Maintenance (the Committee). The HA will proactively follow up on various improvement recommendations to protect the safety of patients and staff.

The Chairman of the Committee, Mr Wan Man-ye, said: "During the past three months, the Committee has analysed the causes of various incidents, consulted our staff and professionals in the industries. The Committee has made 23 recommendations on improving maintenance of medical equipment, conducting building safety inspection by in-house staff as well as making use of technology etc. to strengthen the protection to patients and staff."

After the analysis and visits to the concerned hospitals, the Committee concluded the incidents related to the maintenance of medical equipment and facilities with the following observations:

1. Ageing buildings and facilities – the HA managed over 300 buildings, more than half of which were completed more than 30 years ago; and
2. Extremely heavy usage of facilities – ever-increasing demand for hospital services led to heavy usage of medical equipment and facilities for a prolonged period of time.

And the Committee made the following recommendations:

1. Maintenance of medical equipment
 - i. Biomedical engineering staff should supervise the equipment maintenance on site according to the Risk Class;
 - ii. Expand the establishment of biomedical engineering staff and establish procedures to provide checking and supervising to the maintenance service by the contractors;
 - iii. Procurement of medical equipment for new hospitals and major maintenance contracts should be centrally handled at the Hospital Authority Head Office (HAHO) level with the involvement of Clusters;
 - iv. Set up depositories with clear and documented procedures in indexing and maintaining the manufacturer's service manuals;
 - v. Establish a system for verifying identity, authorisation and qualifications of contractor staff for equipment maintenance. The contractors are also required to conduct periodic self-appraisal regularly;
 - vi. Digitalise the work processes of maintenance services with IT enhancements;
 - vii. Biomedical engineering staff at Clusters should focus on medical

equipment maintenance while clerical staff should provide administrative support; and

viii. Enhance professional development and training for staff working on medical equipment maintenance.

2. Facility Maintenance

i. Establish rolling inspection and maintenance programmes and scheduled planned maintenance programmes for buildings according to age, usage, uniqueness of the structural/building fabric design, history of spalling and risk profile;

ii. Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of Facility Management (FM) staff at the HAHO/Cluster/Hospital level;

iii. Keep a comprehensive record of building inspection and repairs; employ modern technology and tools/equipment for inspection, monitoring and evaluation of building conditions; address the root cause of water leakage/seepage using scientific methods;

iv. Progressively employ a full team of relevant disciplines of building professionals in each of the seven Clusters;

v. Expand the Cluster/Hospital/HAHO staffing to enable the use of in-house staff in conducting Building Safety Inspection (BSI) surveys and exercise direct control on BSI; and

vi. Strengthen professional training for Cluster/Hospital FM teams and enhance grade management.

3. Internal and external communication

i. Elevate the role of Corporate Communication Department in information dissemination, advising cluster management as well as engaging external stakeholders;

ii. Devise internal reporting mechanism as well as public disclosure guiding principles for medical equipment and facility events; and

iii. Strengthen media training for HAHO/Cluster leaders.

The Chief Executive of the HA, Dr Tony Ko, said: "We sincerely express our gratitude to the Committee Chairman, Mr Wan, and the members (annex). Over the past three months, the Committee has conducted comprehensive review of the maintenance of medical equipment and facilities in public hospitals and made valuable recommendations. The HA will proactively follow up on relevant recommendations, implement the concerned measures as soon as possible according to hospital operations and needs, as well as introduce advance technology to assist in inspection and assessment so as to enhance the safety of patients and staff."

The HA is also reviewing the reports submitted by outsourced vendors. The HA will proceed the legal procedures according to the terms and conditions under the contract to look into relevant liabilities by the vendors.

Dr Ko said that the safety of patients and staff members is the HA's utmost concern. Therefore, departments concerned will formulate detailed follow-up plans and report on work progress on a regular basis; a hospital safety committee will also be established to strengthen supervision of

hospital safety matters.