

LCQ1: Supporting victims of sexual violence

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Pierre Chan and a reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, in the Legislative Council today (June 16):

Question:

The Hospital Authority (HA) has made available two designated rooms in each of the 18 public hospitals with accident and emergency (A&E) departments across the territory to provide victims of sexual violence with one-stop services, including diagnosis and treatment, statement taking and forensic examinations. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of persons, who claimed to have been raped or indecently assaulted, receiving diagnosis and treatment at the A&E departments of public hospitals in each of the past five years; among such persons, the number of those who had their statements taken and who underwent forensic examinations in the same hospital, as well as the number of those who went through only one of these two procedures and the reasons for that; if such information is unavailable, whether it will compile the statistics;

(2) of the respective numbers of persons, who claimed to have been raped or indecently assaulted, receiving diagnosis and treatment, having their statements taken and undergoing forensic examinations in (i) the designated rooms and (ii) other places of public hospitals, in each of the past five years, and the reasons why these procedures were not conducted in the designated rooms; if such information is unavailable, whether it will compile the statistics; and

(3) given that this Council passed a motion at its meeting of December 12, 2018 urging the Government to allocate additional resources to HA for setting up a crisis support centre in a public hospital on Hong Kong Island, in Kowloon and in the New Territories respectively, of the details and latest progress of the related follow-up work, including site selection, funding arrangements and the timetable for public consultation?

Reply:

President,

The Government has commissioned the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals to operate the CEASE Crisis Centre (CEASE) to provide on a 24-hour basis "one-stop" crisis intervention and support services for victims of sexual violence under a multi-disciplinary collaboration service model. Upon receipt of a referral of sexual violence case by medical personnel, social workers, the Police or other relevant professionals, CEASE's designated social worker

would immediately attend to the victim at the place where the victim locates and accompany the victim to go through all the necessary procedures, including coordinating and arranging support and follow-up services namely medical care (e.g. post-coital contraception as well as screening and prophylactic treatment of sexually transmitted diseases), forensic examination, statement-taking, emotional counselling, social work support, short-term accommodation and service information in a convenient, safe, confidential and supportive environment, with a view to minimising the need for the victim to repeat accounts of their unpleasant experience.

In consultation with the Food and Health Bureau and the Security Bureau, my reply to various parts of the Member's question is as follows:

(1) and (2) Currently, the Hospital Authority (HA) has arranged two designated rooms (including one back-up room) in each of the 18 public hospitals providing Accident and Emergency services across the territory for provision of "one-stop" service to victims of sexual violence. To ensure that relevant healthcare and professional staff are familiar with the procedures of the "one-stop" service for better coordination, the Social Welfare Department (SWD), the HA, the Hong Kong Police Force and the relevant departments have reviewed the arrangement of the designated rooms and would co-organise "one-stop" service drills on a regular basis. Under the "one-stop" service model, and with the victim's consent, the Police strive to arrange as far as practicable statement-taking and forensic examination to be conducted in the same public hospital where the victim receives treatment to prevent the victim from travel exhaustion and at the same time expedite the investigation process. When attending interviews by the Police and forensic examination, the victim may choose to be accompanied by suitable person(s) according to their personal preference.

The HA neither keeps statistics on rape and indecent assault victims receiving treatment or examination, nor any statistics on the Police's taking statements and conducting forensic examinations at public hospitals' Accident and Emergency Department. At present, the HA's medical system does not keep any data on sexual violence or other cases. Doctors use patient's initial clinical symptoms as the diagnosis code when entering a case into the system of Accident and Emergency Department, and may not use the case or the nature of the case as the major clinical marker. The HA's Accident and Emergency Department provides a designated room and a back-up room to facilitate the "one-stop" service for victims seeking treatment in public hospitals' Accident and Emergency Department. Due to the high turnover of patients in the Accident and Emergency Department, the Department currently does not collect data on the use of designated rooms by specific types of patients or persons.

(3) The HA noted the views on setting up crisis support centres in public hospitals, and will dovetail with the Government's policy direction on crisis support for sexual violence victims as appropriate to explore service enhancement and feasibility for providing them with more optimal support in public hospitals. If needed, the HA could actively study the provision and enhancement of the relevant rooms or facilities in newly built or renovated

hospitals for patients in need, including sexual violence victims, in its long-term planning.