

LCQ10: Use of automated external defibrillator

Following is a question by Professor Hon Joseph Lee and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (October 24):

Question:

It has been learnt that when a person has become unconscious because he is suffering from a heart attack, his survival rate may significantly increase if people at the scene immediately perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and first aid on him with the use of an automated external defibrillator (AED). It has been reported that in recent months, a member of the public had fallen unconscious in a public sports ground but the staff at the scene did not know how to use an AED to perform first aid on that person. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it knows the existing number of people in Hong Kong who have received the following two types of first aid training: CPR and use of AEDs;
- (2) of the number and details of distribution of AEDs provided in public venues managed by the Government (broken down by District Council district); the number of times for which such AEDs were used, and the number of persons who suffered sudden heart attack at such venues but people at the scene did not perform first aid on them with the use of AEDs, in the past three years;
- (3) as some members of the public are worried that improper use of AEDs may aggravate the conditions of the patients and, as a result, they have to bear legal liabilities, whether the authorities will make reference to the practices of overseas countries and enact a Good Samaritan law to exempt rescuers from legal liabilities that might be incurred in performing first aid, so as to encourage members of the public to perform timely first aid on those in need at the scene; and
- (4) whether policies are currently in place to promote the wider use of AEDs, including training more members of the public to use the device, and encouraging more private organisations to provide AEDs at venues under their management?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Professor Hon Joseph Lee is as follows:

- (1) Various organisations have been offering first aid courses to teach

participants first aid knowledge. As far as government departments and public bodies are concerned, relevant first aid courses are organised by the Department of Health (DH), the Hospital Authority (HA), the Fire Services Department (FSD) and the Auxiliary Medical Service (AMS).

The DH regularly organises Basic Life Support Provider Courses covering cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and the use of automatic external defibrillators (AEDs) for its healthcare staff to enhance their knowledge of various first aid methods. From 2013 to 2017, the DH organised a total of 369 such courses for its healthcare staff with 2 979 attendances.

The three training centres of the HA which are accredited by the American Heart Association have been providing courses on basic life support and advanced cardiovascular life support. The courses, which cover CPR and the use of AEDs, aim to enhance the knowledge of HA staff and the public in handling heart attack and the first aid for it. In 2017-18, the HA organised such courses for 10 595 staff, as well as 2 077 other non-HA healthcare personnel and members of the public.

Since 1999, the FSD has trained over 32 000 people under its community CPR training courses. Starting from April 2017, the FSD has also introduced the "Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation Training Programme in Campus" to secondary schools in Hong Kong, under which secondary school students and staff are taught about CPR and the importance of its early application, and are encouraged to resuscitate cardiac arrest patients during emergencies. To date, about 6 400 staff and students have participated in and received training under the Programme.

Besides, from June 2017, the FSD has rolled out the "Community Awareness on Responding to Emergency" (CARE) Programme, which is a simplified course that teaches the public general knowledge about CPR and AED. So far, about 2 100 people have participated in the Programme. The FSD has launched in August 2017 the "Press to shock – Save a life" Public Access Defibrillation Course, which covers the application of CPR and AED in a comprehensive and detailed manner, and over 4 400 members of the public have completed the course.

Starting from January 2016, the AMS has provided CPR and AED training to 8 600 of its members as well as members of the public. Besides, from 2017 to 2018, the Civil Aid Service has provided the aforementioned training to 437 of its members.

(2) The number of AEDs installed at public facilities/establishments as at September 2018 and their usage in the past three years are listed in the Annex.

(3) & (4) There is currently no legislation in Hong Kong providing for the exemption of rescuers from legal liabilities that might be incurred in performing first aid. The issue of whether such legislation should be introduced requires thorough discussion among relevant policy bureaux, departments and stakeholders, taking into consideration various factors and requisite conditions, including the public awareness of heart attack and

their knowledge of the first aid for it, as well as the level of first aid training of rescuers.

The Government has been carrying out through different channels public promotion on CPR and the use of AEDs, and providing training in this regard.

Since mid-2017, the FSD has rolled out the CARE Programme and the "Press to shock – Save a life" Public Access Defibrillation Course, so as to teach the public knowledge about AED and the application techniques, in the hope that when a patient suffers from a cardiac arrest, members of the public can immediately resuscitate the patient and increase the patient's survival rate. Besides, the FSD has established the Community Emergency Preparedness Division in October 2018 with a view to introducing new elements into public education on fire prevention and ambulance services, including strengthening the public's knowledge on CPR and the use of AED.

The Accident and Emergency Training Centre of the HA will continue to provide various types of emergency medical training courses, including courses on CPR and the use of AEDs, for HA staff and members of the public.

The Government will continue to collaborate with other public and private organisations through various means for the publicity, promotion, education and training on first aid skills.