

## LCQ12: Treatment for persons in custody suffering from hepatitis C

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Pierre Chan and a written reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr John Lee, in the Legislative Council today (June 9):

Question:

On the treatment for persons in custody (PICs) suffering from hepatitis C provided by the Medical Officers seconded from the Department of Health to correctional institutions, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the current number of the PICs diagnosed with hepatitis C;
- (2) of the number of the PICs who received treatment for hepatitis C in each of the past five years, and whether they were prescribed with medications for treating hepatitis C; and
- (3) whether any PICs suffering from hepatitis C were referred to the hepatology specialist outpatient clinics under the Hospital Authority for treatment in the past five years; if so, of the number of persons in each year?

Reply:

President,

The Correctional Services Department (CSD) is committed to providing a secure, safe, humane, decent and healthy custodial environment for persons in custody (PICs), including ensuring that all PICs can receive necessary and appropriate medical services in accordance with the Prison Rules (Cap. 234A).

Based on the information provided by the CSD and the Food and Health Bureau, the consolidated reply to the questions raised by the Member is as follows:

Every correctional institution under the CSD has a hospital or sick bay operating 24 hours a day, where medical officers from the Department of Health (DH) and correctional officers with nursing qualifications provide basic medical services. PICs who require specialist treatment, intensive care or surgery will receive treatment in public hospitals. Moreover, medical specialists from the Hospital Authority (HA) and the DH visit correctional institutions on a regular basis to provide the PICs with specialist consultation and treatment.

Generally speaking, the CSD does not maintain statistics on the numbers of the PICs suffering from different kinds of diseases, including hepatitis

C.

The HA and the CSD do not maintain statistics on the number of the PICs with hepatitis C who have been referred to hepatology specialist out-patient clinics under the HA for treatment.

As for treatment of hepatitis C patients in general, the HA has expanded the Drug Formulary since October 2020 to make full use of oral direct-acting antiviral (DAA) medicines for treatment of hepatitis C patients regardless of the severity of patients' condition. With DAA medicines, the cure rate is as high as 95 per cent to 100 per cent, which is higher than that of the conventional combination of interferon and ribavirin used previously. The treatment period has also been shortened from over a year to eight to 12 weeks.