

LCQ14: Hiring of part-time doctors

Following is a question by the Hon Mrs Regina Ip and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Food and Health, Dr Chui Tak-yi, in the Legislative Council today (May 22):

Question:

Some doctors have relayed to me that while the training cost for doctors is high and both the number and ratio of female medical students have been increasing incessantly in recent years, quite a number of female doctors quit their jobs after getting married because of the excessively long working hours in the public hospitals, so that they can be dedicated to taking care of their families. Such doctors consider that the Hospital Authority (HA) may provide married female doctors with special part-time arrangements to enable them to attend to both family and work. On the other hand, in order to alleviate the manpower shortage situation, HA has implemented measures for retaining staff and strengthening manpower, including (i) rehiring retired or departed doctors, (ii) recruiting locum doctors and nurses since December 1, 2018, and (iii) piloting the fractional work arrangement in the first quarter of 2019 to provide frontline professional staff who cannot work full-time temporarily due to special needs or reasons with special arrangements to work fractionally for a fixed period of time. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the respective (i) numbers and (ii) male-to-female ratios of students admitted to the faculties of medicine of the various universities in each of the past five years;
- (2) whether it knows the (i) number, (ii) male-to-female ratio and (iii) hourly wages of retired or departed doctors rehired by HA in each of the past five years;
- (3) whether it knows the respective current (i) numbers and (ii) male-to-female ratios of locum doctors in the ranks of Non-specialist and Specialist hired by HA;
- (4) whether it knows the current (i) number and (ii) male-to-female ratio of Specialists who are currently provided with fractional work arrangements by HA; and
- (5) as the findings of a survey have indicated that the fees charged by general practitioners and specialists in private practice last year were \$300 and \$800 per consultation respectively, and the workload in the public hospitals is generally heavier than that in private clinics, whether the Government has assessed if the remunerations currently offered by HA to locum doctors in the ranks of Non-specialist and Specialist (the maximum hourly wages for them being \$685 and \$762 respectively) are attractive enough; if it has assessed and the outcome is in the negative, whether it will allocate

additional resources to HA in order to raise the relevant remunerations and provide married female doctors with special part-time arrangements?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Mrs Regina Ip is as follows:

(1) The tables below set out the respective numbers and male-to-female ratios of students admitted to the faculties of medicine of the two universities in the past five academic years:

Faculty of Medicine of the University of Hong Kong

Academic year	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	Total
Male	109	116	122	128	137	612
Female	105	94	118	107	106	530
Total student intake	214	210	240	235	243	1 142

Faculty of Medicine of the Chinese University of Hong Kong

Academic year	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	Total
Male	110	112	112	124	118	576
Female	119	119	137	121	121	617
Total student intake	229	231	249	245	239	1 193

(2) The Hospital Authority (HA) has implemented the Special Retired and Rehire Scheme (the Scheme) since 2015-16 to rehire suitable serving doctors, nurses and allied health professionals upon their retirement or completion of contract at/beyond their normal retirement age in order to retain suitable expertise for training and knowledge transfer, and to help alleviate manpower issues. Doctors participating in the Scheme are re-employed on contract full-time basis. The basic salary of rehired staff is the last drawn basic salary of the staff before leaving service at normal retirement age, subject to the maximum salary of the prevailing rank. Other terms and conditions of the rehired staff will be on par with new recruits to the rank offered. The number and male-to-female ratio of doctors rehired and serving in the HA under the Scheme as at March 31, 2019 are as follows:

Number of doctors	58
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Male	49
Female	9

(3) As at April 30, 2019, the respective numbers and male-to-female ratios of locum doctors in the ranks of Non-specialist and Specialist are as follows:

	Specialist	Non-specialist
Number of locum doctors	19	14
Male	12	7
Female	7	7

(4) To retain experienced hands, the HA is actively considering the introduction of more flexible options in work arrangements without compromising service quality and safety. In this connection, the HA introduced at the end of the first quarter of this year a pilot run of fractional work arrangement for medical staff in Accident & Emergency and Family Medicine departments. Under the arrangement, full-time frontline professional staff who have temporary special needs and compassionate reasons, such as health and family reasons, can work fractionally for a fixed period of time and thereafter resume their full-time duties. The pilot scheme is open for application now and the HA is processing the applications received.

(5) The hourly wages of locum doctors in the ranks of Non-specialist and Specialist are determined with reference to the remuneration of HA contract full-time doctors and the prevailing market situation. In addition to adjusting their pay annually in accordance with the pay offers approved by the HA Board, the HA also keeps in view its manpower situation and monitors changes in the labour market so as to conduct timely reviews to meet service needs and enhance service quality. The locum scheme welcomes applications from all qualified persons including married women.