

LCQ14: Services of accident and emergency departments of public hospitals

Following is a question by the Hon Michael Tien and a written reply by the Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, in the Legislative Council today (October 18):

Question:

The extension of the accident and emergency department (AED) of Tuen Mun Hospital officially commenced service in June this year. However, the current waiting time at that AED is frequently criticised by residents in the district as overly long. Regarding the services of the AEDs of public hospitals, will the Government inform this Council if it knows:

- (1) the respective attendances and staffing establishments of the AEDs of the 18 public hospitals under the Hospital Authority (HA) in the past three years (set out in a table);
- (2) the projected and actual population served by the AED of Tuen Mun Hospital;
- (3) the respective average waiting times for non-urgent patients at the AED of Tuen Mun Hospital in the three years preceding its expansion and since its expansion;
- (4) the respective average waiting times at the AEDs of Pok Oi Hospital and Tin Shui Wai Hospital under the New Territories West Cluster in the past three years; and
- (5) whether HA has studied how to shorten the waiting time at the AED of Tuen Mun Hospital?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Hospital Authority (HA), the reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Michael Tien is as follows:

At present, there are 18 public hospitals under the HA providing Accident and Emergency (A&E) services for the critically ill or seriously injured people and victims of disasters. To ensure that citizens with urgent needs can receive timely services, A&E departments implement a patient triage system under which patients are classified into five categories, namely Critical, Emergency, Urgent, Semi-urgent and Non-urgent based on their

clinical conditions, and will receive treatment as prioritised by their urgency category. The HA's service target specifies that Critical patients will receive immediate treatment, and most Emergency (95 per cent) and Urgent (90 per cent) patients will be treated within 15 or 30 minutes respectively.

Tables 1 and 2 below show the number of A&E attendances and manpower deployment of A&E departments in the 18 public hospitals under the HA over the past three years (Note):

Table 1: Number of A&E attendances from 2020-21 to 2022-23

Cluster	Hospital	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Hong Kong East	Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital	96 651	104 604	102 608
	Ruttonjee Hospital	51 825	60 506	56 652
	St. John Hospital	6 591	7 354	7 299
Hong Kong West	Queen Mary Hospital	98 145	107 820	100 469
Kowloon Central	Kwong Wah Hospital	93 032	101 485	102 823
	Queen Elizabeth Hospital	145 318	166 131	155 064
Kowloon East	Tseung Kwan O Hospital	93 262	103 913	99 970
	United Christian Hospital	124 778	140 273	132 023
Kowloon West	Caritas Medical Centre	98 338	108 148	96 465
	North Lantau Hospital	63 007	79 889	71 653
	Princess Margaret Hospital	92 055	109 389	100 105
	Yan Chai Hospital	100 572	112 240	97 029
New Territories East	Alice Ho Miu Ling Nethersole Hospital	76 884	86 503	81 241
	North District Hospital	71 733	76 342	78 810
	Prince of Wales Hospital	121 640	143 163	141 250
New Territories West	Pok Oi Hospital	76 996	82 447	82 498
	Tuen Mun Hospital	126 828	142 785	141 892
	Tin Shui Wai Hospital	102 798	107 037	93 240
Total		1 640 453	1 840 029	1 741 091

Table 2: Number of A&E doctors calculated on full-time equivalent basis from 2020-21 to 2022-23

Cluster	Hospital	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
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Hong Kong East	Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital	38	35	33
	Ruttonjee Hospital	19	19	17
	St. John Hospital	6	5	5
Hong Kong West	Queen Mary Hospital	32	30	26
Kowloon Central	Kwong Wah Hospital	30	31	33
	Queen Elizabeth Hospital	48	53	52
Kowloon East	Tseung Kwan O Hospital	26	28	28
	United Christian Hospital	47	47	44
Kowloon West	Caritas Medical Centre	29	27	31
	North Lantau Hospital	31	28	27
	Princess Margaret Hospital	34	33	36
	Yan Chai Hospital	34	33	30
New Territories East	Alice Ho Miu Ling Nethersole Hospital	23	23	23
	North District Hospital	21	21	22
	Prince of Wales Hospital	33	39	38
New Territories West	Pok Oi Hospital	24	22	23
	Tuen Mun Hospital	43	43	47
	Tin Shui Wai Hospital	26	25	25
Total*		545	543	540

* Figures are rounded to the nearest whole number and may not add up to the total due to rounding

At present, the HA provides services according to clusters, among which the New Territories West Cluster (NTWC) provides public hospital services for residents of Tuen Mun and Yuen Long. According to the latest population estimates by the Census and Statistics Department and the Planning Department, the mid-year population of the Tuen Mun and Yuen Long districts in 2022 was 1 167 000.

Hospitals under the NTWC include Tuen Mun Hospital (TMH), Pok Oi Hospital (POH), Castle Peak Hospital, Siu Lam Hospital and Tin Shui Wai Hospital (TSWH), among which TMH, POH and TSWH provide A&E services for residents.

Tables 3 to 5 below show the average waiting time of A&E services for each triage category of the NTWC over the past three years (Note). When comparing the throughput of services provided by the HA across the years, it should be noted that in view of the COVID-19 epidemic situation, the HA adjusted its services in response to the epidemic since early 2020:

Table 3: Average waiting time of A&E services for each triage category of the NTWC in 2020-21 (minutes)

Hospital	Priority 1 (Critical)	Priority 2 (Emergency)	Priority 3 (Urgent)	Priority 4 (Semi-urgent)	Priority 5 (Non-urgent)
POH	0	6	19	125	161
TMH	0	6	24	150	156
TSWH	0	4	13	83	104

Table 4: Average waiting time of A&E services for each triage category of the NTWC in 2021-22 (minutes)

Hospital	Priority 1 (Critical)	Priority 2 (Emergency)	Priority 3 (Urgent)	Priority 4 (Semi-urgent)	Priority 5 (Non-urgent)
POH	0	7	20	156	191
TMH	0	7	27	151	154
TSWH	0	5	14	132	165

Table 5: Average waiting time of A&E services for each triage category of the NTWC in 2022-23 (minutes)

Hospital	Priority 1 (Critical)	Priority 2 (Emergency)	Priority 3 (Urgent)	Priority 4 (Semi-urgent)	Priority 5 (Non-urgent)
POH	0	6	19	118	156
TMH	0	7	26	135	136
TSWH	0	6	15	136	168

Overall, the average waiting time for Critical, Emergency, Urgent patients in each acute hospital of the NTWC meets the service targets specified by the HA.

To further improve the service quality and waiting time of A&E services, the HA has actively implemented a series of measures including:

(1) Strengthening manpower for doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and supporting staff, and continuously implementing measures including the Special Honorarium Scheme, leave encashment, etc. to enhance manpower of A&E departments so as to increase service capacity;

(2) Enhancing support to A&E departments from geriatric departments and

setting up observation areas in A&E departments to reduce unnecessary hospital admissions; and

(3) Centrally publishing the waiting time of A&E departments of public hospitals through multiple platforms, including the HA website, "HA Go" mobile application and A&E registration counters, to strengthen communication with the public and manage public expectations about the waiting time of A&E departments, such that patients with mild illnesses can obtain information on the overall service situation of A&E departments before setting off to A&E departments or registering and hence decide whether to seek medical treatment in A&E departments.

The HA will continue to keep a close watch on the needs of Tuen Mun and Yuen Long residents for public healthcare services, and regularly look into the complementation of healthcare resources and manpower with a view to developing various services as necessary. Meanwhile, the Government will continue to encourage citizens to make more use of primary healthcare and family doctor services in the community with a view to relieving the pressure on public A&E services effectively, such that A&E departments can better focus on management of critical cases and emergency service while serving as a safety net for all.

Note: This refers to the financial year, i.e. from April 1 to March 31 of the following year.