

LCQ16: Developing Chinese medicine

Following is a question by the Hon Wong Ting-kwong and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (July 15):

Question:

To promote the development of Chinese medicine (CM), the Government has allocated \$500 million to establish the Chinese Medicine Development Fund (CMDF). On developing CM, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the total amount of subsidies approved since the launch of CMDF in June last year, with a tabulated breakdown by the names of the projects approved;

(2) given that the Mainland medical sector has launched the traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) health management services for the elderly with TCM constitution identification as the core, and has developed the Four Diagnostic Instrument that collects patients' clinical data through electronic means and continuously monitors the changes in such data, whether the Government will include those projects for developing electronic CM and big data for CM in the funding scope of CMDF; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) of the respective to-date numbers of applications for subsidies under CMDF which involved online learning of CM received and approved;

(4) whether it will include those projects which apply blockchain technology in logistics control of Chinese medicines in the funding scope of CMDF; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(5) of the progress of the work to include CM information in the Electronic Health Record Sharing System (commonly known as "eHRSS")?

Reply:

President,

The Government announced the establishment of a \$500 million dedicated fund in the 2018-19 Budget to further promote and facilitate the development of Chinese medicine (CM). We aim to enhance the overall standards of the industry by providing the CM and CM drug sectors with financial support, including nurturing talents for the CM industry and the CM Hospital (CMH), promoting CM-related scientific research, supporting local CM drug traders in improving the quality and standards of production, as well as registering their proprietary Chinese medicines (pCms) in accordance with statutory requirements, and enhancing public knowledge and understanding of CM.

The Food and Health Bureau established an Advisory Committee (AC) under the Chinese Medicine Development Fund (CMDf) to advise and make recommendations to the Government on matters relating to the overall administration and operation of the CMDf. The AC is mainly responsible for formulating the application guidelines and procedures as well as assessment and funding criteria, assessing applications, specifying the terms and conditions for approved applications, and determining the amount of funding to be granted for such applications, etc. Non-official members of the AC are representatives of the sectors of CM, CM drugs, testing and certification, healthcare as well as experts, academics and lay persons with rich experience in business management and public administration. The Hong Kong Productivity Council is the implementation agent of the CMDf and provides secretariat service for the AC to support its operation.

Funding schemes under the CMDf were drawn up after consultation with the CM Development Committee and taking into account the views from the industry. There are two schemes under the CMDf, namely the Enterprise Support Programme (ESP) (A Scheme) and the Industry Support Programme (ISP) (B Scheme). The A Scheme provides matching funds for individual CM practitioners (CMPs) and CM clinics, members of the CM drug industry and CM drug manufacturers/traders to enhance the manufacturing and management qualities as well as support them in registering their pCms in accordance with statutory requirements. The B Scheme provides subsidies for non-profit-making organisations, professional bodies, trade and academic associations and research institutions to organise training programmes and courses to nurture talents needed by the CMH and facilitate the development of CM, conduct applied studies or research on CM, and organise various CM promotional activities, etc. In addition, a CM resources platform has been established under the CMDf to consolidate reference materials on CM and CM drugs so as to provide a variety of resources to facilitate information exchange and development of the industry.

In consultation with the Department of Health, the Hospital Authority and the implementation agent of the CMDf, a consolidated reply to the five parts of the question is set out below.

(1) The CMDf was officially launched in June 2019. Most of the funding schemes under the CMDf have been rolled out in phases. Applications received from the industry are undergoing the vetting procedure. All funding schemes under the CMDf, the application procedures, vetting criteria and information on approved projects have been uploaded to the CMDf website (www.CMDevFund.hk) for access by the public. The number of applications received by the implementation agent and the amount of funding approved as at May 31, 2020 are set out in the table below.

	Funding Scheme	Sub-category	Number of applications	Number of applications approved	Amount of funding
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ISP	CM Industry Training Funding Scheme and CM Promotion Funding Scheme (B1)		73	13	About \$9 million
	CM Applied Studies and Research Funding Scheme (B2)		83	11	Over \$10 million
ESP	pCm Registration Supporting Scheme (A3)		382	152	Over \$2 million
	CM Personal Training and CM Clinic Improvement Funding Scheme (A1)	Training Courses recognised under the Qualifications Framework, Training Courses with Assessment, General Training Courses	100	18	Over \$1 million
		CM Clinic Improvement Funding Scheme	204	10	About \$140,000
	pCm Quality and Manufacturing System Enhancement Funding Scheme (A2)		To be rolled out for application by the industry (Note 1)		
	CM Warehouse Management, Logistics and Services Improvement Funding Scheme (A4)		To be rolled out for application by the industry (Note 2)		

Note:

1 The implementation agent is currently reviewing applications from service providers and application by pCm manufacturers would be open once the approved list of service providers has been compiled.

2 The implementation agent is finalising the details of the scheme and liaising with the industry on the scheme details. It is expected that the scheme would be rolled out for application by the industry in the second half of 2020.

(2) to (4) The B Scheme provides funding for non-profit-making organisations, relevant institutes/societies, trade associations and universities to organise a variety of CM-related activities such as training courses, workshops and seminars, with a view to addressing the inadequacies of the existing courses in the market and having regard to the development of CM in Hong Kong, in order to cultivate talents, enhance the professional knowledge level and demonstrate standards of good practice in the industry. The B Scheme also provides funding for eligible organisations to organise different activities to promote CM, such as mobile exhibitions, exhibitions, promotional events, video filming and computer/mobile phone applications development to showcase the latest development of the industry and enhance public knowledge of CM. In addition, the B Scheme covers research projects of different types and scales, such as CM technology applied studies and industry research, to promote the overall development of the industry. Research projects that are conducted by relatively few organisations or are yet to be supported by other funds, such as research on traditional CM, are

also covered by the B Scheme.

Taking into consideration the views of the industry and having sought approval from the AC, the implementing agent recommended a list of priority themes as a basis for vetting the applications and resource allocation. The list of priority themes has been uploaded to the CMDF website and will be updated at appropriate junctures in light of the development of the industry. The CMDF schemes have been well-received by the industry. Over 150 applications have been received and the AC has approved some of the applications upon detailed vetting and deliberation. Approved training programmes cover, among others, hospital management, inheritance of traditional CM, clinical application of CM drugs and training on specialised disease treatment, some of which involve e-learning. Approved promotion projects cover on-campus promotion, picture book production, topical conferences and lectures. Approved research projects cover research on the professional certification system of CM pharmacists and persons engaged in CM drug industry, research on the use of CM by the public, clinical research on CM, and research on the processing technology of CM drugs.

On the promotion of electronic medical record system and enhancement of facilities and equipment in CM clinics, the CM Clinics Improvement Funding Scheme (A1-4 Scheme) is set up under the A Scheme to provide funding for eligible CM clinics to enhance their medical record system, improve clinical operations in the areas of safety and hygiene, and provide better quality CM services to the public. The scheme was launched in March 2020. As at May 31, 2020, the implementing agent has received a total of 204 applications, most of which are undergoing the vetting process. Among these applications, 10 applications have been approved with funding involving about \$140,000.

On the improvement of CM drugs logistics, the CM Warehouse Management, Logistics and Services Improvement Funding Scheme (A4 Scheme) is set up under the A Scheme to provide funding for eligible wholesalers and retailers of Chinese herbal medicines (Chm) to purchase related equipment to enhance the efficiency and safety of the handling, storage and transportation of Chm. The implementation agent is finalising the details of the scheme and liaising with the industry on the scheme details. It is expected that the scheme would be open for applications in the second half of 2020.

(5) In July 2017, the Government embarked on the Stage Two Development of the Electronic Health Record Sharing System (eHRSS), which includes broadening the scope of sharable data to cover CM information. The Government has developed a clinical software, namely the Chinese Medicine Information System (CMIS) On-ramp, the key functions of which include patient registration and appointment, access of and contribution to medical records, assistance to diagnosis and procedures, as well as prescription and dispensing of CM. The CMIS On-ramp helps promote the application of information technology by the industry, improves the quality and efficacy of diagnosis, and facilitates the sharing of CM information on the eHRSS. The Government launched the CMIS On-ramp in the first quarter of this year for CMPs to use on a pilot basis and will collect their feedback afterwards. To encourage CMPs to use the CMIS On-ramp, applications for funding under the A1-4 Scheme will be given

priority if the applicants concerned agree to use the CMIS On-ramp. As at May 31, 2020, 107 applications for the CMDF have been received from CMPs under the aforementioned mechanism. We will continue to enhance the CMIS On-ramp. Depending on its implementation and feedback from the stakeholders, we expect to launch a pilot scheme in the third quarter of this year for CMPs to share CM information of patients on the eHRSS.