

LCQ20: Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Healthcare Talents Visiting Programmes

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Pui-leung and a written reply by the Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, in the Legislative Council today (December 6):

Question:

The Hospital Authority (HA) has launched the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) Healthcare Talents Visiting Programmes (the Programmes), with the aim to deepen professional exchanges of healthcare workers in Hong Kong and the Guangdong Province and foster the development of public healthcare services in Hong Kong and the Mainland. It has been reported that the first batch of healthcare professionals (i.e. 83 healthcare professionals from the Guangdong Province) came to Hong Kong for exchanges in April this year, and the second batch of healthcare professionals is expected to arrive in Hong Kong at the end of this year. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as it is learnt that HA has alleviated the manpower pressure on the public healthcare system with the launch of the Programmes, but the relevant healthcare professionals only come to Hong Kong for short-term exchanges, whether it knows how HA alleviates the problem concerned through the Programmes;

(2) whether it knows the number of the second batch of healthcare professionals coming to Hong Kong for exchanges and their healthcare professions;

(3) whether it knows when HA expects to arrange for Hong Kong healthcare professionals to go on exchanges to public hospitals in the Guangdong Province, and of the relevant details; and

(4) as it is learnt that HA hopes to regularise the Programmes in the future in order to establish a talent pool of healthcare professionals in GBA, of the relevant details and implementation timetable?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Hospital Authority (HA), the consolidated reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Chan Pui-leung is as follows:

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) and the HA have all along been actively exploring various collaboration

models with stakeholders to drive the exchange and co-operation of healthcare talents in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), with a view to enhancing the professional standard of clinical healthcare and its development in the GBA in a collective manner. With support from the Health Commission of Guangdong Province and the Health Bureau of the HKSAR Government, the HA launched the Greater Bay Area Healthcare Talents Visiting Programmes in the fourth quarter of 2022. It aims to establish a sustainable exchange mechanism to foster the professional exchange among healthcare workers of the public healthcare systems in the GBA. The first phase of the programmes, with Guangdong Province as the pilot, covers various clinical healthcare professions such as doctors, nurses, Chinese medicine practitioners and radiographers. With the progressive implementation of the exchange programmes, interactions among healthcare workers in different areas of the GBA will be strengthened, such that they will become familiar with the operation of the healthcare systems in other areas. This will be conducive to the building of an overall healthcare manpower pool in the GBA and enhancement of its standard.

As at end of October 2023, a total of 10 doctors, 70 nurses, seven Chinese medicine practitioners and five radiographers from different cities in Guangdong Province have come to Hong Kong and commenced exchange of different forms in the hospitals of the HA. The duration of exchange in Hong Kong of the healthcare professionals from Guangdong Province is determined and arranged correspondingly having regard to the exchange format and actual circumstances of the respective healthcare professions. Taking doctors as an example, the 10 doctors from Guangdong Province who participated in the first phase of the exchange will be in Hong Kong for a period of one year. They have been approved by the Medical Council of Hong Kong to practice with limited registration. Generally speaking, the maximum duration of limited registration is three years. Upon expiry of the registration, one can apply for renewal. During the exchange period, apart from training programmes, a number of those healthcare professionals participate in clinical services in a co-ordinated manner. This provides a good opportunity for mutual learning and enhancement of clinical work standards for healthcare professionals of both places, and helps alleviate the pressure of manpower shortage in the HA. Healthcare professionals of both places involved in the relevant programmes have expressed positive response to the programmes, indicating that anticipated outcomes have been achieved.

Based on the successful implementation of talent exchange and co-operation with Guangdong Province in the first phase, "The Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address" has put forward the strengthening of two-way training and exchange of healthcare talents between Hong Kong and the Mainland. On this, the HA is committed to progressively driving various visiting programmes, further extending the depth and breadth of talents exchange. Specifically, the HA will continue with the Greater Bay Area Healthcare Talents Visiting Programmes and is planning the second batch of exchange programmes with the Health Commission of Guangdong Province. Under the co-ordination of the Health Commission of Guangdong Province, it is anticipated that over 100 healthcare professionals from different cities of Guangdong Province will come to Hong Kong for exchange in the first quarter of 2024.

More professional healthcare disciplines will also be covered in the second batch of exchange programmes, e.g. ophthalmology. On the other hand, the HA has reached consensus with the Health Bureau of Macao to launch the Macao Specialist Trainee Programme. The first batch of doctors from Macao is expected to come to Hong Kong for training in the first quarter of 2024.

In the meantime, the HA is actively exploring with the Health Commission of Guangdong Province and relevant units on sending its staff to the public hospitals in Guangdong Province for learning and exchange, including arranging the HA's radiographers to visit Tier III Class A hospitals in Guangdong Province for technical exchange for mutual benefits. In addition, the HA is also gradually planning to actively explore with other regions or cities of the Mainland, such as Beijing and Shanghai, to establish two-way talent exchange, including studying the feasibility of sending outstanding healthcare professionals from Hong Kong to the Mainland for learning and exchange in the latter's public healthcare system. Relevant arrangements are expected to be gradually in place next year.