

LCQ20: Hospital Authority's facility management

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 (November 13):

Question:

Public hospitals in Hong Kong had a number of incidents involving medical equipment and facilities in early 2023. Subsequently, the Hospital Authority (HA) formed the Review Committee on Medical Equipment and Facility Maintenance (the Committee) on March 6 of the same year to review the relevant areas. The Committee submitted a review report in June of the same year and put forward a number of improvement recommendations to the HA, among which each hospital cluster should establish progressively a facility management (FM) team comprising building professionals of relevant disciplines, and should expand the establishment concerned with a view to achieving the target of deploying in-house staff to undertake surveying of building conditions and direct monitoring of building safety inspections (the recommendations). It is learnt that the HA has not been able to employ sufficient manpower to implement the recommendations through local recruitment exercises. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows the HA's estimation of necessary manpower deployment and number of staff for implementing the recommendations, and the number of staff already employed at present; and

(2) whether it will discuss with the Labour and Welfare Bureau to allow importation of labour to the HA's FM teams through labour importation or supplementary labour schemes to solve the manpower shortage problem; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

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

(1) The Government and the HA attach great importance to the safety of patients and staff. In view of a number of incidents involving medical equipment and facilities at the time, the HA established the Review Committee on Medical Equipment and Facility Maintenance (Review Committee) in March 2023 to review systematically the repair and maintenance issues of medical equipment and facilities in public hospitals. With a view to strengthening protection for patients and staff, the Review Committee proposed multiple recommendations on enhancing the maintenance of medical equipment, conducting

building safety inspections by in-house staff and introduction of technology, etc, through incident analysis, site visits to hospitals as well as consultations with staff and industry experts. Since the Review Committee submitted the report in June 2023, the HA has actively followed up on the relevant recommendations and progressively put in place relevant measures in accordance with the operation circumstances and needs of hospitals, etc, with a view to ensuring the safety of patients and staff. Up to date, all recommendations have been put into place.

Regarding the maintenance of building facilities, the HA has implemented improvement measures proposed by the Review Committee in relation to organisational structure, application of technology, human resources and training, etc. For example, under the rolling inspection and maintenance programmes, the HA has formulated and commenced a series of inspection programmes, among which building facilities will be regularly inspected according to different risk categories, i.e. taking into account factors such as their usage, age and degree of aging, and impact on hospital safety and operation, etc, for categorising the facilities into different risk levels. The inspection frequency for the facilities is set in a targeted manner to reduce the possibility of sudden breakdown or damage.

In addition, the HA, in accordance with the recommendations, is gradually building up a full team comprised of relevant disciplines of building professionals and switching to deploying in-house staff for building safety inspections, so as to exercise direct monitoring on building safety inspections. Following the direction of the report recommendations, the HA has recruited over 30 additional relevant professionals or works supervisory personnel as in-house staff and will continue the recruitment efforts based on the needs of the seven clusters. The objective is to gradually expand the pool of relevant in-house professionals or works supervisory personnel to over 100 in the next few years. Meanwhile, the HA will also deploy existing facility management staff as necessary to enhance building inspection work with support from outsourced maintenance contractors, and ensure the quality of inspection work through multi-tier monitoring and audit.

(2) The HA attaches great importance to the professionalism of the facility management teams. On one hand, the HA requires the responsible teams to have relevant work experience and technical expertise. On the other hand, the teams should also understand hospital operation and be able to arrange inspection workflow in a flexible manner in order to cater various specific circumstances of hospitals. With reference to the arrangements of the Buildings Department's Mandatory Building Inspection Scheme and Mandatory Window Inspection Scheme, etc, the HA assigns personnel with relevant qualifications to inspect hospital facilities or monitor the inspection work to ensure that relevant work is completed properly. Besides, the HA aims for the responsible teams to accumulate experiences, particularly on collaboration with healthcare staff, through rolling inspection work, so as to enhance the efficiency of such work. In parallel, the HA has also proactively introduced advanced technology to ease manpower demand pressure, e.g. using aerial cameras to expedite the survey of external walls, and enhancing the efficiency of facility management and monitoring of the

operation of major equipment through building information modelling. The HA targets to establish a standing professional team that is familiar with the HA operation to provide appropriate and targeted maintenance services for hospital facilities in the long term. Considering the need for continuity in the team, the HA currently has no plans to import labour nor join the Enhanced Supplementary Labour Scheme.