

LCQ21: Public healthcare services in Wong Tai Sin district

Following is a question by the Hon Yang Wing-kit and a written reply by the Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, in the Legislative Council today (June 19):

Question:

It is learnt that there is currently a lack of public accident and emergency (A&E) services in the Wong Tai Sin (WTS) district, while the three public hospitals in the district only provide limited specialist outpatient services, and only two general outpatient clinics (GOPC) offer evening consultation services, resulting in many residents in the district having to seek medical consultation in other districts with occasional delays in treatment. Regarding the public healthcare services in WTS district, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the following information (broken down by hospital) relating to the use of public healthcare services by the residents in WTS district in each of the past three years: (i) the respective attendances at A&E departments, GOPC and specialist outpatient clinics; (ii) in-patient attendances for treatment; and (iii) the average time taken from patients' boarding the ambulance in the district to their arrival at A&E departments;

(2) whether it will study the establishment of a new acute hospital in WTS district, including the establishment of an acute hospital in the context of the expansion of the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Wong Tai Sin Hospital on the vacant land made available after the relocation of Diamond Hill Fresh Water and Salt Water Service Reservoirs, in order to meet the healthcare needs of the residents in the district; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it will consider extending the service hours of outpatient services of Our Lady of Maryknoll Hospital Family Medicine Clinic to round the clock; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Security Bureau and the Hospital Authority (HA), the consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon Yang Wing-kit is as follows:

(1) At present, there are 43 public hospitals and healthcare institutions (18 of them with Accident & Emergency (A&E) departments), 49 Specialist Out-patient Clinics (SOPCs) and 74 General Out-patient Clinics (GOPCs) under the

HA. Public hospitals are mainly responsible for providing comprehensive secondary and tertiary healthcare services for citizens, including services provided by A&E departments for the critically ill or seriously injured people and victims of disasters and specialist consultation services provided by SOPCs for patients referred from GOPCs, private or family doctors. As part of primary healthcare services, the GOPCs are mainly positioned to serve with priority low-income individuals and socially disadvantaged groups, and patients with chronic diseases in stable medical condition as well as those with episodic illnesses with relatively mild symptoms.

All the hospitals and clinics of the HA are grouped under seven hospital clusters according to the regions in which they are located respectively, the demarcation of which is different from that of the 18 District Councils. The implementation of hospital clusters aims to enable patients to receive continual care within the same geographical setting and throughout their treatment process, from onset through convalescence, rehabilitation, and community after-care. To meet this end and ensure the cost-effective utilisation of resources within and between clusters, every hospital cluster needs to maintain a certain scale. The hospitals and clinics within clusters are to also operate in a streamlined and complementary way to provide comprehensive and co-ordinated services for the local community.

At present, Wong Tai Sin, Kowloon City and Yau Tsim Mong Districts are within the main catchment area of the Kowloon Central Cluster (KCC). There are nine hospitals and healthcare institutions in the KCC, including Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH), Kwong Wah Hospital (KWH), Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Wong Tai Sin Hospital (WTSH) and Our Lady of Maryknoll Hospital (OLMH). The service statistics of HA patients living in Wong Tai Sin, Kowloon City and Yau Tsim Mong Districts according to hospital clusters for 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 are set out in Annex 1. A&E services for Wong Tai Sin District are mainly provided by three hospitals (Note 1) including KWH and QEH, as well as United Christian Hospital (UCH) in the Kowloon East Cluster.

According to the information provided by the Fire Services Department in relation to the ambulance services in Wong Tai Sin District, the average time taken from patients boarding the ambulance in the district to their arrival at the A&E department of the hospitals in 2021, 2022 and 2023 were about 23 minutes, 22 minutes, and 23 minutes respectively.

(2) The HA plans and develops various public healthcare services on a cluster basis, taking into account a number of factors, including the increase in service demand as a result of population growth and demographic changes, rising prevalence of chronic diseases, technology advancement, manpower availability as well as service arrangement of the clusters. The HA will monitor the utilisation of various healthcare services and plans the public healthcare services based on population projection parameters of the districts and the Government's development plans. For planning of A&E services, the HA will also ensure that the A&E department is located within a reasonable distance from its catchment areas.

In further planning the Second Hospital Development Plan (HDP), the

Health Bureau (HNB) and the HA will continue to review the development direction of the KCC where Wong Tai Sin District is situated. The Government's latest population statistics and projected service demand as well as the cluster's healthcare service utilisation and demand, including the situation after the commencement of operation of the new acute hospital (NAH) at the Kai Tak Development Area and redevelopment of KWH, will be considered during the process with a view to providing an optimal healthcare service model and facilities for meeting the long-term needs of the residents. The HA will also keep in view the on-going First HDP and the Second HDP under planning in relation to the KCC, and continue to deliberate and fully consider various feasible development options according to the projected service demand, including the need and feasibility of identifying a suitable site for the construction of a new acute hospital, and follow up with relevant government departments and organisations on the discussion and project development. The Health Bureau and the HA will report to the Legislative Council in a timely manner regarding the latest progress of the Second HDP.

(3) Two of the GOPCs in Wong Tai Sin District, including OLMH Family Medicine Clinic (FMC) and Robert Black GOPC, provide evening clinic service. In view of the medical needs of the local residents, OLMH FMC has extended the consultation hours during public holidays since April 2015, from morning only to full-day consultation service provision covering morning and afternoon. In addition, the relevant clinic has been providing additional evening clinic sessions (Note 2) since the second quarter of 2017 to further enhance the services. From 2017-18 to 2023-24, the evening clinics of the HA's GOPCs in Wong Tai Sin District have recorded total attendances of nearly 350 000 in meeting the district's demand for evening clinic service. The utilisation of evening clinic service in the GOPCs of Wong Tai Sin District over the past three years is set out in Annex 2.

The HA fully understands and attaches great importance to the service demand of the residents of Wong Tai Sin District for evening clinics. Before the commencement of operation of the NAH in the Kai Tak Development Area, the HA will continue to closely monitor the service demand of the district, flexibly deploy manpower and other resources, and increase the service capacity of the GOPCs as necessary, in order to provide appropriate primary healthcare service to the local residents.

Note 1: Since some of the areas in Wong Tai Sin district are closer to UCH with shorter arrival time, to enable patients with serious conditions or injuries and victims of disasters to receive treatment as soon as possible, some of the patients may be transferred to UCH.

Note 2: The service hours of evening clinics of the HA's GOPCs are from 6pm to 10pm on Monday to Friday (public holidays excluded).