

## Medical and health sector assists in anti-epidemic efforts

The Government expresses gratitude to the medical and health sector for assisting in anti-epidemic efforts and joining hands to serve the community to combat the fifth wave of the epidemic.

The Chief Executive met with representatives from private hospitals on March 8, urging private hospitals to provide more hospital beds for receiving patients referred by the Hospital Authority (HA) and suggesting them to offer medical support through various means to alleviate the immense pressure currently faced by public hospitals. In addition, the Secretary for Food and Health had a meeting with representatives of the medical and health sector from various healthcare professional bodies, medical and nursing schools of tertiary institutions, medical organisations, healthcare institutions and non-governmental organisations on March 9 to enlist their all-out efforts in mobilising healthcare professionals within a short period of time to support the Government's various epidemic containment measures.

In response to the Government's earlier appeal, private hospitals have been gradually providing more hospital beds for receiving non-COVID-19 patients and recovering COVID-19 patients referred from the HA. This has enabled the HA to focus their resources and manpower to combat the current epidemic. On March 13, 149 HA patients were using hospital beds in private hospitals under the arrangement of low-charge beds and Public-Private Partnership Programme (see Annex for the figures over the past week). The HA will continue to closely liaise with private hospitals, with a view to referring more suitable patients to private hospitals for treatment.

Various private healthcare institutions have been actively participating in the operation of community isolation facilities to provide medical support to persons who are subject to isolation. Among which, the Government previously established two holding centres at Choi Wing Road Sports Centre and Shek Kip Mei Park Sports Centre to receive either elderly patients who have been infected with COVID-19 but are showing mild symptoms and referred by the HA or recovering elderly patients who are assessed by the HA as suitable for discharge in order to provide them with proper care. The Government is actively planning to launch more holding centres, and is encouraged by the fact that various private hospitals have indicated interest in sending medical teams to participate in the operations. The Social Welfare Department and the HA will closely collaborate with private hospitals, such that the relevant holding centres may commence service as early as practicable.

Furthermore, various private hospitals are now providing outpatient or telemedicine services for COVID-19 patients to offer diagnosis and treatment to infected persons in the community.

A Government spokesperson said, "We are pleased to note that the medical and health sector has jointly contributed in protecting public health at this critical juncture. With concerted efforts from different sectors of the community, Hong Kong will certainly overcome the epidemic."