

Number of Voluntary Health Insurance Scheme policies exceeds 500 000 in first year of implementation (with photo)

The Voluntary Health Insurance Scheme (VHIS) has been fully implemented since April 2019 to strengthen the benefit level for hospital insurance products. In the first year of its implementation (as at March 31, 2020), the number of policies under Certified Plans reached 522 000.

A spokesman for the Food and Health Bureau said today (September 11), "According to the estimate by an independent consultant before the launch of the VHIS, about 1 million people would purchase Certified Plans in the first two years of the implementation of the scheme. The current number of policies reflects that the scheme is well on course to achieving this target."

As at the end of July 2020, 67 Certified Plans (including 30 Standard Plans and 37 Flexi Plans) had been certified by the Food and Health Bureau and were available in the market, offering 257 products for consumers to choose from. In the first year of the implementation of the VHIS, 96 per cent of the applications for policy coverage were accepted.

Among those insured by the 522 000 policies, most (97 per cent) purchased Flexi Plans. The others purchased Standard Plans. More than half (54 per cent) of the insured are aged below 40 and more than one-third (34 per cent) are aged below 30. The above figures reflect that the VHIS is attractive to the younger generation.

According to the statistics for the first nine months of the scheme, most of the insurance claims (96 per cent) were successful, with more than one-third of them (34 per cent) receiving full reimbursement. More than two-thirds of the cases (67 per cent) had a reimbursement ratio of 90 per cent or above, and about 80 per cent had a reimbursement ratio of 80 per cent or above.

To facilitate product comparison by consumers, a "Plan Search" function is provided in the consumer corner of the VHIS website (www.vhis.gov.hk). Through this function, users can easily compare the coverage and premiums of various Certified Plans. Moreover, a chatbot function namely "VHISeBOT", has been newly introduced on the website, providing a platform for consumers to ask questions about the VHIS and receive answers in a simple and interactive manner at any time. The website also provides information on tax deductions under the scheme.

The VHIS is part of the Food and Health Bureau's effort in maintaining the public-private balance among other important policy initiatives. The VHIS

seeks to regulate the individual indemnity hospital insurance products and improve market transparency, providing consumers with greater confidence in purchasing health insurance and using private healthcare services when in need, thereby alleviating pressure on public hospital services in the long run.

