

Secretary for Health chairs 18th meeting of Cancer Coordinating Committee (with photo)

The Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau chaired the 18th meeting of the Cancer Coordinating Committee (CCC) today (June 12) to review the implementation of the Hong Kong Cancer Strategy (Cancer Strategy) and discuss the response strategies and measures with relevant government departments and organisations.

Cancer is a global public health issue, and also the top killer in Hong Kong. Over the past five years, cancer claimed over 40 lives every day on average in Hong Kong. Promulgated in July 2019, the Cancer Strategy was Hong Kong's very first comprehensive plan formulated for cancer prevention and control work, setting out a series of strategies related to cancer prevention and treatment for the period between 2020 and 2025. With the concerted efforts of relevant government departments and organisations in implementing various aspects of the Cancer Strategy in the past few years, the Government is now having a clearer picture of the priorities and direction for cancer prevention and control work. The Government is also further improving cancer patients' quality of life and increasing their chance of survival, thereby reducing the burden of cancer on the local healthcare system.

At the meeting, members reviewed and discussed the progress of various cancer prevention and control measures, including:

Surveillance

The Hong Kong Cancer Registry is responsible for local cancer surveillance work. Dedicated to recording and consolidating data on various types of cancer, the Registry assists the society in planning, monitoring, and evaluating various cancer services through scientific data analysis. In recent years, the Registry has not only supported the evaluation of the prevailing cancer screening programmes (such as Colorectal Cancer Screening Programme and Breast Cancer Screening Pilot Programme (BCSPP)), but also ramped up the collection and compilation of more comprehensive cancer surveillance data, including the provision of complete and accurate staging data on nine prevalent cancers in Hong Kong and as well as stage-specific survival rates of eight cancers, so as to enable various stakeholders to make accurate judgments and strengthen cancer prevention and control.

Cancer Prevention and Screening

The Department of Health (DH) has all along been promoting a healthy lifestyle as the primary strategy for cancer prevention. The DH makes every effort in stepping up public education related to cancers with a view to

raising public awareness of cancer prevention and screening, including rolling out new Announcements in the Public Interest in May last year and January this year respectively to promote cervical cancer and colorectal cancer screening.

The Colorectal Cancer Screening Programme was fully implemented since January 2020 to subsidise asymptomatic Hong Kong residents aged 50 to 75 to undergo screening. As of December last year, more than 354 000 eligible individuals joined the Screening Programme. About 27 000 and 2 400 of these participants were diagnosed with colorectal adenoma and colorectal cancers respectively. Among the colorectal cancers detected under the Screening Programme, about 57 per cent were of the early stage (i.e. stage II or below).

The Maternal and Child Health Centres under the DH also offer subsidised cervical cancer screening to eligible women aged 25 to 64. Since April this year, the DH has adopted the human papillomavirus (HPV) testing with higher sensitivity in the cervical cancer screening services for eligible women. Moreover, as of December 31 last year, about 540 000 women aged 25 to 64 have registered with the DH's [Cervical Screening Information System](#) through which they can review their screening results and receive recommendations for further screening.

Separately, the DH launched the two-year BCSP in the latter half of 2021 to provide breast cancer screening services for eligible women in a risk-based approach at its three Woman Health Centres and 18 Elderly Health Centres. The Government is currently gearing up for the next phase breast cancer screening work and will announce the details in due course.

Diagnosis, Treatment and Survivorship Care

The Hospital Authority (HA) will continue to enhance the cancer diagnostic procedures, strengthen check-up and management of services as well as provide cross-disciplinary support. On cancer treatment, the HA ushers in advanced and brand new medical technology and equipment based on clinical needs and in an evidence-based approach, including the introduction of the Magnetic Resonance simulator and Smart Treatment Planning System to enhance the planning and treatment quality of radiotherapy, and the acquisition of Computed Tomography and Magnetic Resonance Imaging scanners, in addition to getting prepared for the installation of advanced linear accelerators in different hospitals. The HA also regularly reviews and enhances the subsidised area of the HA Drug Formulary and the safety net through the prevailing mechanism, with a view to enhancing cancer treatment services. With regard to the support for cancer survivors, the HA will proactively develop individual cancer-based care programmes according to the service framework formulated earlier, explore the deepening of collaboration with different community partners and take forward telehealth services to help cancer survivors live a healthy life in the community.

Research

The Health Bureau (HHB) has all along been supporting cancer researches related to cancer prevention, diagnosis, treatment and survivorship through the Health and Medical Research Fund (HMRF), so as to formulate evidence-based health policies in a bid to reduce morbidity and mortality of cancer and to improve the patients' conditions and their quality of life. Since the Government's promulgation of the Cancer Strategy, the HMRF has supported 188 investigator-initiated research projects, 10 health promotion projects and 16 Research Fellowship Scheme projects as well as a multiple commissioned research related to cancer and its risk factors, such as commissioned researches in evaluating BCSPP.

The CCC also reviewed the city-wide population-based cancer data for 2020, as well as the incidence, mortality and survival rates of major cancers in Hong Kong. In particular, a total of 34 179 newly diagnosed cancer cases were recorded in Hong Kong in 2020, involving 16 703 males and 17 476 females. While the number of newly diagnosed cancer cases dropped by 903 (a fall of 2.6 per cent) from 2019 to 2020, cases involving women outnumbered that of men for the first time on record. In addition, lung cancer remains the most prevalent cancer in Hong Kong for the second consecutive year. As shown by the stage-specific survival rates of multiple cancers, the survival rate will be much higher if the cancer is detected at an early stage and the patient can undergo treatment as soon as possible. The five-year relative survival rates for patients whose cancers were diagnosed at an early stage in Hong Kong are 90 per cent or higher, with those for breast, prostate and thyroid cancers almost reaching 100 per cent. This implies that the ratio of early-stage cancer patients surviving for more than five years is comparable to that of the general population. The CCC noted that the current data reflected the burden and prevalence of cancer in Hong Kong, and considered that cohorts with cancers which exhibited an increasing incidence with significant mortality warrant special attention. These surveillance data can help the Government plan future cancer prevention and control work as well as relevant strategies better.

Established in 2001 and chaired by the Secretary for Health, the CCC comprises cancer experts and doctors from the public and private sectors, academics and public health professionals. The CCC makes recommendations on the formulation of strategies on cancer prevention and control, while steering the direction of work in relation to cancer prevention and screening, treatment, surveillance and research. The Cancer Expert Working Group on Cancer Prevention and Screening under the CCC regularly reviews international and local evidence and makes recommendations on cancer prevention and screening applicable to the local setting. In addition, the Hong Kong Cancer Registry, the HA and the Research Office of the HHB oversee cancer surveillance, treatment and research respectively.

