

Secretary for Health expresses gratitude to private hospitals for continuously receiving patients from Hospital Authority

The Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, expressed gratitude to private hospitals for continuously receiving patients transferred from the Hospital Authority (HA) over the past few weeks. He also called on patients and their family members to co-operate with the transfer arrangement so that the HA could focus its resources in effectively tackling the challenges posed by the COVID-19 epidemic.

Since the number of daily new cases in Hong Kong has remained high at four-digit figures, Professor Lo met with representatives from the Hong Kong Private Hospitals Association earlier to explore public-private partnerships among hospitals with a view to alleviating the pressure on public healthcare services. As a matter of fact, the HA needs to adjust the scale of non-emergency services due to the recent increase in the number of hospitalised patients. Such an adjustment is expected to affect nearly one-fourth of the services, and the situation is undesirable. The fact that private hospitals are willing to receive the HA's patients substantially helps to maintain the operation of the public healthcare system, which is also vital to protecting the lives and safety of citizens.

All 13 private hospitals have shown support to the appeal after the aforementioned meeting by providing a total of 364 hospital beds at the initial stage, and the number of hospital beds can be gradually brought up to around 1 000 depending on the actual demand. Upon discussion between the HA and private hospitals, public hospitals have started to gradually transfer patients to private hospitals to continue treatment since late July.

Professor Lo said, "I am sincerely grateful to all 13 private hospitals for their assistance by providing beds to receive patients transferred by the HA, particularly St Teresa's Hospital which has deployed additional beds in early August to cater for the HA's actual demand, and CUHK Medical Centre which has made use of its isolation ward to provide treatment to COVID-19 patients. In addition, various hospitals such as St Paul's Hospital, Hong Kong Sanatorium & Hospital, Gleneagles Hospital Hong Kong, Evangel Hospital and Hong Kong Adventist Hospital – Tsuen Wan have been actively receiving patients from relevant HA clusters in response to the need in different districts.

"However, the HA mentioned that a small portion of patients in the public hospitals did not agree to be transferred to private hospitals for continuous treatment over the past few weeks. I wish to emphasise that the HA will definitely conduct a professional evaluation before making each transfer

to ensure that a patient is suitable for such an arrangement and will not charge additional fees. I appeal to patients and their family members to cooperate with the transfer arrangement positively to contribute to our anti-epidemic efforts."

The HA will continue to liaise with private hospitals closely to refine details such as criteria for transfer and adjustments in services with a view to minimising the processing time. This will enable more suitable patients to receive treatment in private hospitals as early as practicable, and allow public hospitals to focus their resources in combating the epidemic.