

Secretary for Health visits Hong Kong Genome Institute (with photos)

The Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, and the Under Secretary for Health, Dr Libby Lee, visited the Hong Kong Genome Institute (HKGI) today (August 9), where they exchanged views with HKGI Board members and staff to get a better grasp of the latest progress of the Hong Kong Genome Project (HKGP).

Professor Lo toured the HKGI's laboratory in the company of Chairperson Mr Philip Tsai, Deputy Chairperson Professor Raymond Liang and Chief Executive Officer Dr Lo Su-vui of the HKGI. The laboratory commenced operation last December, and is equipped with advanced instruments and devices for the HKGI's professional staff to perform sequencing services with further analysis and research. The HKGI has formulated rigorous quality indicators for each procedure to ensure that sample processing, sequencing and analysis are all performed with the highest quality in compliance with relevant international standards. During the tour, Professor Lo received a briefing by HKGI staff on their work in relation to nurturing talents, and he also interacted with the summer interns.

Professor Lo said, "In the light of the technological advancements and challenges posed by an ageing population and emerging diseases, our healthcare system must keep abreast with the times and continue to transform with innovation. Genomic medicine is exactly the key area in the medical field and scientific research of the day, given its vast potential in screening, diagnosis and personalised treatment of diseases.

"Genomic medicine can improve the diagnosis, prognostication and treatment of various diseases, and help patients identify the cause of diseases earlier. The Government will continue to support the work of the HKGI on driving the clinical application of genomic medicine, scientific research, nurturing talents and enhancing genomic literacy, so that citizens may benefit from the scientific advancement and thus live healthier lives."

The Government established the Steering Committee on Genomic Medicine in December 2017 to map out the strategies for developing genomic medicine in Hong Kong. The Government also set up the HKGI in 2020 upon the recommendation of the Steering Committee to promote the local clinical application and long-term development of genomic medicine, with the HKGP as the HKGI's first key initiative.

Since its full operation last year, the HKGI has been working in partnership with the Hospital Authority, the Faculty of Medicine of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine of the University of Hong Kong and the Department of Health to recruit participants and their family members to join the project on a voluntary basis. The pilot phase, which was launched in July last year, covered cases of undiagnosed

disorders and hereditary cancers. The main phase, with the scope extended to cases related to genomics and precision health, is now in progress.

It is estimated that whole genome sequencing would be conducted for 20 000 cases under the entire project, thereby allowing patients to benefit from more precise diagnosis and appropriate treatment, as well as promoting research and development in related areas to cater for the future needs of medical services in Hong Kong.

Members of the public can browse the website of the HKGI (www.hkgp.org) for more information about the HKGP.



