

SFH briefs stakeholders on policy to promote Chinese medicine development in Hong Kong

The Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, visited the Chinese Medicine Clinic cum Training and Research Centre (CMCTR) in Central and Western District and the ward for integrated Chinese-Western medicine (ICWM) in-patient services located at Tung Wah Hospital today (October 25), and briefed stakeholders on the policy to promote the development of Chinese medicine (CM) in Hong Kong.

Accompanied by the Chairman of the Hospital Authority (HA), Mr Henry Fan, and the Chief Executive of the HA, Dr Tony Ko, Professor Chan first visited the CMCTR and met with the Chairman of the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals, Mr Kazaf Tam, and a number of young Chinese medicine practitioners (CMPs) to brief them on initiatives related to the development of CM in "The Chief Executive's 2021 Policy Address" and listen to their views.

"As stated by the Chief Executive in her Policy Address, the Government has affirmed the positioning of CM in the development of healthcare services in Hong Kong, and has rolled out various measures to promote the development of CM. The two flagship institutions, i.e. the first Chinese Medicine Hospital in Hong Kong and the Government Chinese Medicines Testing Institute, will be commissioned in 2025. The Government will continue to provide government-subsidised out-patient services through the 18 CMCTRs at the district level across the territory, develop ICWM in-patient services, and enhance the Chinese Medicine Development Fund to support the CM sector. To promote the long-term development of the CM sector, the Government will explore empowering CMPs to prescribe diagnostic imaging (such as X-rays) and laboratory tests for their patients," Professor Chan said.

Professor Chan also highlighted in the meeting the two major policy measures announced by the relevant authorities of Guangdong Province that are favourable to Hong Kong, namely recruiting Hong Kong CMPs by public healthcare institutions in the Mainland cities within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) and streamlining the approval procedures for Hong Kong registered traditional proprietary Chinese medicines for external use to be registered in the Mainland. She said that the relevant policy measures will spur the Hong Kong CM sector on to pursue development in the GBA. She learned about the working situation of young CMPs in Hong Kong and encouraged them to seize the opportunities to further their development, so as to proactively integrate into national development and participate in the construction of the CM highlands in the GBA.

Professor Chan then visited the consultation rooms and CM pharmacy of the CMCTR to learn about the operation.

"Since March 2020, the Government has been providing an annual service

quota of about 620 000 for government-subsidised CM out-patient general consultation, acupuncture and bone-setting/tui-na services through the 18 CMCTRs over the territory, which are operated under a tripartite collaboration model involving the HA, non-governmental organisations and universities. The services are well received by the public, helping address the needs for primary healthcare at the district level. CMCTRs have all along been promoting the development of CM through CM services, training and research. Furthermore, with the facilitation and support of the Food and Health Bureau (FHB), the HA launched the Special CM Out-patient Programme and the Special CM Programme for COVID-19 In-patients for those infected with COVID-19, further allowing CM to give full play to its strength in anti-epidemic treatment," Professor Chan said.

Lastly, Professor Chan visited the ward for ICWM in-patient services to speak with patients receiving ICWM stroke rehabilitation services.

"Since April 2021, the HA has introduced ICWM in-patient services in United Christian Hospital. At present, there are a total of eight public hospitals providing ICWM in-patient services, covering all seven hospital clusters of the HA. In-patient CM services and follow-up CM out-patient services are provided to patients of selected disease areas (including stroke care, musculoskeletal pain management and cancer palliative care). To tie in with the policy direction of the long-term development of CM, the HA is exploring further increasing the number of participating hospitals and disease areas, as well as regularising the service concerned.

"With the development of primary healthcare in Hong Kong, CM services are also part of the primary healthcare team. I hope CMCTRs will work closely with the District Health Centres (DHCs) or DHC Expresses in the 18 districts in Hong Kong," Professor Chan added.

For details of the CMCTRs and ICWM in-patient services, please visit the HA CM KINetics website: cmk.ha.org.hk.

Professor Chan will continue to brief stakeholders on initiatives related to the FHB in the Policy Address.