

SFH calls on private healthcare sector to get prepared for resumption of face-to-face classes in schools (with photo)

The Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, had a meeting with over 20 representatives of the medical and health sector from various healthcare professional bodies, medical organisations and medical institutions via video conferencing today (April 14) to appeal to the private healthcare sector to continue to unite in the fight against the epidemic by helping to treat COVID-19 patients and getting prepared for the phased resumption of face-to-face classes in schools, so as to cope with the possible rebound in the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 after the resumption of face-to-face classes.

During the meeting, Professor Chan and the Under Secretary for Food and Health, Dr Chui Tak-yi, briefed the representatives of the medical and health sector on the latest development of the epidemic and urged healthcare professionals to get prepared for a possible rebound of the epidemic after the resumption of face-to-face classes for timely assistance in treating COVID-19 patients (including students and their families).

Professor Chan said, "While the epidemic has stabilised recently, there is no room for us to relax. We must continue to do our best to uphold the principle of 'three reductions, three focuses and one priority'. This means that reduction in the number of infections, severe cases and deaths is the important goal of the current phase. Meanwhile, more precise, stronger and more targeted measures should be applied to the 'three focuses' (focused groups of people, focused premises and focused areas), and support for the elderly must be accorded priority."

"In the light of the significant and downward trend of the number of confirmed cases, the Government announced earlier that primary and secondary schools as well as kindergartens would resume face-to-face classes by phases after Easter. However, we anticipate that such measure has its risk and we cannot rule out the possibility that the number of confirmed cases may rebound after the Easter holidays. To this end, we hope that the medical and health sector, especially Chinese and Western medical practitioners in private practice, can assist in treating COVID-19 patients."

To facilitate private doctors in treating COVID-19 patients, the Government has put in place an online platform to enable private doctors who have registered under the Electronic Health Record Sharing System to obtain COVID-19 oral drugs. At present, about 150 private doctors have already obtained the relevant drugs through this channel. Based on the list of private doctors who have obtained the COVID-19 oral drugs through the online

platform, the Department of Health will later announce the list of private doctors online to facilitate the public in receiving treatment.

In addition, the Food and Health Bureau has launched a special support scheme through the Chinese Medicine Development Fund, co-ordinated by the Federation of the Hong Kong Chinese Medicine Practitioners and Chinese Medicines Traders Association, to provide subsidies to Chinese medicine (CM) practitioners to provide free CM telemedicine services and delivery service of CM drugs to COVID-19 patients at home, enabling the CM sector to commit their anti-epidemic efforts in full swing and mobilising the resources of Hong Kong's CM sector which are concentrated in the private market.

Representatives of the medical and health sector attending the meeting undertook to encourage their healthcare professionals to help treat COVID-19 patients. Lastly, Professor Chan expressed her gratitude to the medical and health sector and healthcare professionals for joining hands with the Government in tackling the fifth wave of the epidemic in the past few months. She hoped that the sector would continue to work in a concerted manner, so that Hong Kong can overcome the epidemic soon.

