

Sharing knowledge on clinical advances at Hospital Authority Convention

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The Hospital Authority (HA) Convention 2021 is being held at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre and via webinar today and tomorrow (May 3 and 4), with around 50 distinguished speakers from the Mainland, overseas and Hong Kong sharing their knowledge and insights on various health topics of interest with around 3 000 healthcare and academic professionals.

Commemorating the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the HA, the annual HA Convention is this year focusing on the HA's core values, namely "People-centred Care", "Professional Service", "Committed Staff" and "Teamwork". It aims to promote the sharing of knowledge and experience on clinical advances and approaches to modern healthcare service, and facilitate exploration and discussion of the sustainability of the HA, smart hospitals, combating the pandemic and contemporary concepts among healthcare professionals and stakeholders.

The HA Convention 2021 was officially opened this morning by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam; the Minister of the National Health Commission, Mr Ma Xiaowei (whose speech was delivered via video); the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan; the HA Chairman, Mr Henry Fan; and the HA Chief Executive, Dr Tony Ko.

In his welcome address, Mr Fan expressed gratitude to the Central Government and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government for the unwavering support in combating the pandemic. "The swift setting up of the Community Treatment Facility at AsiaWorld-Expo and the North Lantau Hospital Hong Kong Infection Control Centre has significantly enhanced the resilience and capability of the public healthcare system in fighting the pandemic," he said.

Mr Fan also thanked the Government for its staunch support for the HA. He added that, despite facing the pressure of an acute budget deficit, the Government had continued to increase the HA's annual funding by 4.7 per cent to \$82.4 billion, and had also provided the HA with over \$8 billion for ensuring sufficient support and protection for front-line healthcare staff and timely treatment for patients in combating the pandemic.

While the HA is celebrating its 30th anniversary, Mr Fan said the HA is facing formidable challenges of escalating service demand arising from the growing and ageing population, rising public expectations, and increasing prevalence of chronic diseases.

"Therefore, we have embarked on an agenda to examine the major challenges and develop a blueprint for the sustainable development of our

public healthcare system for the coming decades. The Task Group on Sustainability formed under the HA Board has formulated forward-looking recommendations and measures which are being implemented in stages," he said.

Mr Fan pointed out that the implementation of measures to achieve a sustainable future requires tremendous effort. "With the gathering of so many distinguished speakers and experts from around the world, I believe that we could all gain more insight in not only areas of sustainability and smart hospitals, but also on the latest developments in regard to the COVID-19 pandemic and patient safety," he said.

Delivering his keynote address, "Embracing the Past, Reaching Out for a Sustainable Future", Dr Ko consolidated HA's past experience in preparation for the future ahead.

"Over the past three decades, the HA has held steadfast to its mission to provide high-quality patient-centred healthcare services to the Hong Kong community. We have put in place many initiatives and service developments in terms of hardware and software," he said.

"As we are now moving on with the development of smart care and smart hospital projects for the coming years, I wish to take this opportunity to thank our predecessors who dared to dream big and pioneer a lot of great initiatives. I am really glad to see that this pioneer spirit continues to grow in the HA and many more innovative ideas are budding. And many of our dreams today, I believe, will also become reality very soon."

Dr Ko said the HA had been facing the dual challenge of the growing and ageing population, and the high and increasing number of patients with chronic diseases.

"Hong Kong's population will increase by around 7 per cent from 7.5 million in 2020 to more than 8 million in 2036, with significant growth in the elderly population, with the percentage of elderly sharply rising from 18 per cent to 30 per cent," he said.

"Parallel to the ageing population and higher longevity is the rising occurrence of chronic illnesses, not only for the elderly population but also for middle-aged citizens aged 40 to 64. According to the latest projection, the number of patients with chronic diseases will increase by 50 per cent from 2 million by the end of 2019 to 3 million by the end of 2039."

Dr Ko said the rapidly growing demand would quickly further outstrip the supply, and would be a major sustainability challenge to the HA.

To address the sustainability issue, Dr Ko said that the HA is adopting a three-pronged approach through narrowing upstream, collaborating downstream, and diverting midstream. "One of the key directions is to change the service models towards the provision of smart care so as to keep patients healthy in the community and reduce their need for hospitalisation," he said.

Dr Ko added that the HA has four major strategies in driving for this change of service model: adopting data-driven care, developing personalised care, promoting ambulatory care, and enhancing community-based services.

He said that, facing vigorous growth in demand, as well as a shortage of key manpower resources, the HA is also working towards the strategic direction of developing smart hospitals, aiming to achieve digital innovations in meeting future sustainability challenges.

"In essence, our smart hospital strategy aims to enhance the HA's digital capabilities to develop new models of healthcare delivery, improve patients' experience and engage them better in their own care, and provide more efficient support for both clinical and non-clinical staff in the workplace."

Dr Ko said the HA has also strived to build a smart and happy workforce in enabling the direction towards the provision of smart care and smart hospitals. "The HA currently has almost 90 000 staff. Human capital is always our greatest asset, and is also one of the focus areas studied by the Task Group on Sustainability," he said.

In his concluding remarks, Dr Ko said he believed that with the strong support of the Government and the guidance of the HA Board, a dedicated healthcare workforce and close partnership with other stakeholders, the HA will successfully move forward to provide a sustainable healthcare service to help people live healthier and happier.

"While we may not have magical solutions to all challenges ahead, we have strong resolve to provide the best care to our patients," Dr Ko said.