

# Strategic directions set for driving genomic medicine in Hong Kong (with photos/videos)

The Government today (May 14) announced the Strategic Development of Genomic Medicine in Hong Kong (the Strategy), a blueprint to drive the local development of genomic medicine in order to harness its huge potential in precise diagnoses, personalised treatment and surveillance of diseases.

The Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, said, "There has been a rapid development in genomic technology in recent years. The Government is determined to promote genomic medicine so that patients in need could benefit from more precise diagnoses and more personalised treatment, and the health of our population will be improved in the long run.

"The Government welcomes the Report of the Steering Committee on Genomic Medicine, which is chaired by Professor Raymond Liang, and is pleased to accept the recommendations in full. I would also like to thank members of the Steering Committee and its Working Groups for their insightful and valuable advice."

Among the specific recommendations put forth by the Steering Committee, the \$1.2 billion-budget Hong Kong Genome Project (HKGP) has been accorded the top priority. It is a large-scale genome sequencing project, with the pilot phase focusing on patients and their family members with undiagnosed disorders and hereditary cancers. Up to 40 000 to 50 000 genomes would be sequenced. The Hong Kong Genome Institute will take forward the implementation of the HKGP. Patients with informed consent will be recruited from the three partnering centres at Hong Kong Children's Hospital, Queen Mary Hospital and Prince of Wales Hospital. Sequencing analysis results will be fed back to patients once available to aid diagnoses or clinical management.

Professor Chan added, "The HKGP will be a catalyst to establish a talent pool, the relevant standards and protocols, as well as a genome database of the local population which will greatly facilitate the clinical application of genomic medicine and scientific research."

Other recommendations put forward in the Report include:

- enhancing clinical services in genetics and genomics;
- nurturing talents in genomic medicine;
- enhancing public engagement in genomic medicine;
- enhancing the laboratory network with a effective referral mechanism and centralisation of advanced genetic and genomic tests;
- facilitating the establishment of a biobank network for genomic

research;

- enhancing the regulation on the use of genetic data for insurance and employment purposes; and
- promoting the proper use of genetic and genomic tests.

Pursuant to the Chief Executive's 2017 Policy Address to harness the potential of new technology for better public health policies and clinical outcomes, the Steering Committee on Genomic Medicine was established in December 2017 to map out strategies for developing genomic medicine in Hong Kong. The Steering Committee submitted its report to the Government in December 2019. The Food and Health Bureau will lead and co-ordinate the implementation of the recommendations set out in the Strategy with various stakeholders including the Department of Health, the Hospital Authority, universities, medical and other relevant professional bodies and private sectors.

"Strategic Development of Genomic Medicine in Hong Kong" is now available at the Food and Health Bureau's website ([www.fhb.gov.hk/en/press\\_and\\_publications/otherinfo/200300\\_genomic/index.html](http://www.fhb.gov.hk/en/press_and_publications/otherinfo/200300_genomic/index.html)).

