

Update on cluster of Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci cases at TWGHs Wong Tai Sin Hospital

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

Regarding an earlier announcement on a cluster of Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci (VRE) cases, the spokesperson for TWGHs Wong Tai Sin Hospital (WTSH) gave the following update today (May 22):

Following a contact tracing investigation, two more female patients (aged 89 and 90) in the rehabilitation and extended care ward of WTSH were identified as VRE carriers. The patients concerned are currently being treated in isolation and are in stable condition.

The following enhanced infection control measures have already been adopted in the ward concerned:

1. Isolation of VRE cases and application of stringent contact precautions;
2. Enhanced environmental cleaning and disinfection; and
3. Enhanced hand hygiene for staff and patients.

The hospital will continue the enhanced infection control measures and closely monitor the situation of the ward concerned. The cases have been reported to the Hospital Authority Head Office and the Centre for Health Protection for necessary follow-up.

LCQ19: Prevention of cancers

Following is a question by Revd Canon the Hon Peter Douglas Koon and a written reply by the Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, in the Legislative Council today (May 22):

Question:

It is learnt that in 2021, the five most common cancers in Hong Kong were in the order of lung cancer, colorectal cancer, breast cancer, prostate cancer and liver cancer. Regarding the prevention of cancers, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that Hong Kong residents aged between 50 and 75 with no symptoms of colorectal cancer are subsidised to undergo colorectal screening every two years in the private sector under the Colorectal Cancer Screening Programme

(CRCSP) launched by the Government for the prevention of colorectal cancer, and eligible persons wishing to enrol in CRCSP are required to join the Electronic Health Record Sharing System, whether the Government will consider linking the Elderly Health Care Voucher Scheme (EHVS) to CRCSP (i.e. eligible persons under EHVS will be automatically enrolled in CRCSP), so as to encourage more senior citizens to undergo screening at an early stage; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether it will step up publicity on CRCSP at the district level (e.g. setting up street counters) through District Council members, the District Services and Community Care Teams and social welfare organisations, so as to attract more eligible persons to enrol in CRCSP; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) apart from CRCSP and Phase 2 of the Breast Cancer Screening Pilot Programme in the pipeline, whether the authorities will consider introducing other funding schemes for the prevention of the aforesaid common cancers; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government attaches great importance to cancer prevention and control. Fighting against cancer is an important strategy to prevent and control non-communicable diseases. In 2001, the Government established the Cancer Coordinating Committee (CCC) to formulate strategies on cancer prevention and control and to steer the direction of work covering cancer prevention and screening, surveillance, research and treatment. The CCC is chaired by the Secretary for Health and comprising members who are cancer experts, academics, doctors in public and private sectors as well as public health professionals. The Cancer Expert Working Group on Cancer Prevention and Screening (CEWG) established under the CCC regularly reviews local and international evidence and makes recommendations on cancer prevention and screening applicable to local setting.

The reply, in consultation with the Department of Health (DH), to the questions raised by Revd Canon the Hon Peter Douglas Koon is as follows:

(1) The Colorectal Cancer Screening Programme (CRCSP) has been implemented by the Government since 2016. The CRCSP aims to identify people who have colorectal cancer before symptoms are shown, or people with a higher risk of colorectal cancer, enabling them to receive early treatment and significantly improving the prognosis. The removal of colorectal adenomas in the course of colonoscopy prevents them from turning into cancer. Currently, the CRCSP subsidises regular screening tests for eligible Hong Kong residents aged between 50 and 75.

The recommended criteria for colorectal cancer screening for risk group are set according to the recommendations made by the CEWG after reviewing and discussing the local and international scientific evidence. From the medical perspective, screening refers to the examination of people without symptoms

in order to identify those who already have the disease or at higher risk of disease. There are multiple risk factors for developing colorectal cancer and the risk increases significantly upon reaching the age of 50. The CEWG therefore recommends individuals aged between 50 and 75 to discuss with their doctors and consider screening for colorectal cancer.

As at end-December 2023, more than 420 000 eligible persons participated in the CRCSP. Among those participants who had undergone colonoscopy examination, over 33 000 were found to have colorectal adenomas and about 2 900 were diagnosed with colorectal cancer. A preliminary analysis of about 1 900 colorectal cancer cases revealed that about 57 per cent were earlier-stage cases (stage II or below) with a more favourable prognosis. Statistics show that screening can achieve the aim of early identification and early treatment.

To tie in with the development of primary healthcare services, with effect from October 6, 2023, only doctors enlisted in the Primary Care Directory would be allowed to take part in various government-subsidised primary healthcare programmes (including the CRCSP). Meanwhile, the Primary Healthcare Office (PHO) also actively promotes Life Course Preventive Care Plan through District Health Centres (DHCs) and family doctors, thereby enhancing public awareness of disease prevention and establishing healthy lifestyle. The PHO published the "Hong Kong Reference Framework for Life Course Preventive Care in Primary Healthcare" in September 2023, providing a set of comprehensive and evidence-based guidance on health needs to healthcare professionals. Life Course Preventive Care Plan under the Reference Framework emphasises disease prevention and personalised needs. Personalised plans that focus on disease prevention are established based on factors including individuals' gender, age and family history. In addition to covering aspects such as vaccinations and the prevention and management of chronic diseases, such plans also include cancer screening, under which colorectal cancer screening is recommended for people aged between 50 and 75, and screening for prostate cancer, breast cancer, etc. is recommended based on personal risk factors.

The Government launched the Elderly Health Care Voucher Scheme (EHVS) in 2009 to provide financial incentives for elderly persons to encourage them to receive primary healthcare services, such as preventive care, screening, and management of chronic diseases at private institutions, thereby changing their health-seeking behaviour to achieve early detection and treatment for health protection, and to facilitate them to choose private primary healthcare services that best suit their health needs by providing them with additional healthcare choices on top of the existing public healthcare services. At present, all eligible Hong Kong residents aged 65 or above may benefit from the EHVS. The Government launched the three-year Elderly Health Care Voucher Pilot Reward Scheme (Pilot Reward Scheme) in November 2023 to further incentivise elderly persons through rewards by guiding them to make better use of healthcare vouchers for continuous preventive healthcare and chronic disease management services. Under the Pilot Reward Scheme, elderly persons only need to accumulate the use of vouchers of \$1,000 or more on designated primary healthcare purposes such as disease prevention and health

management (including services on disease prevention, e.g. cancer screening, provided by medical practitioners enrolled in the EHVS) within the year (from January to December), they will be allotted a \$500 reward into their voucher account, which can be used on the same designated primary healthcare purposes.

Meanwhile, eHealth is a territory-wide, patient-oriented electronic sharing platform. It enables authorised public and private healthcare institutions to access and share the electronic health records of participating patients for healthcare purposes, so as to provide more timely diagnosis and treatment and reduce repeated diagnostic tests. The Government announced in the 2023 Policy Address the launch of a five-year plan for eHealth+ to transform eHealth into a comprehensive healthcare information infrastructure that integrates healthcare data sharing, service delivery and care journey management. One of the key focuses of eHealth+ is to build a one-stop Strategic Health Service Operation Platform to support and standardise the clinical and administrative work processes and documentations of all subsidised health programmes and relevant public or private healthcare services. The platform will integrate the systems of the CRCSP and the EHVS and support all primary healthcare programmes (e.g. the Chronic Disease Co-Care Pilot Scheme) and healthcare services strategic purchasing programmes. The eHealth mobile application will be further developed as an integrated health tool for citizens, including encouraging and even reminding registered eligible citizens to participate in various primary healthcare programmes, such as chronic disease and cancer screening programmes, and assisting them in managing relevant care processes to proactively prevent diseases and lead a healthier life.

(2) To enhance public awareness of the CRCSP, the DH has been conducting publicity campaigns through various channels. Health education information and publicity materials are disseminated on different media platforms such as the website (www.colonscreen.gov.hk), television, radio, newspapers, magazines, social media. The DH has also produced TV Announcements in the Public Interest for broadcast and posters for display on television and public transportation (such as trains, buses, ferries, trams) to promote healthy lifestyle among the public for preventing colorectal cancer and encourage eligible persons to participate in the CRCSP. The health education information on the thematic website is also available in different languages (including Bahasa Indonesia, Hindi, Nepali, Tagalog, Thai and Urdu) to help ethnic minorities understand colorectal cancer screening and prevention.

The DH also works with various government departments and organisations such as the Home Affairs Department (HAD), the Housing Authority, and the Social Welfare Department to promote the CRCSP among the public, as well as the Race Relations Unit from the HAD to enhance publicity of the CRCSP among the local ethnic minorities. The DH has also been disseminating health information to the public through publicity at the district level, such as timely conveyance of relevant information to District Councils and stakeholders (including District Services and Community Care Teams). The DH will continue to step up its publicity efforts for the CRCSP through different channels to encourage participation of more eligible persons for

screening to maximise its effectiveness.

The DHCs have also been actively complementing the Government cancer screening programmes, including through conducting health assessment for DHC members, identifying risk factors associated with cancers, and providing support to members of the public to continuously manage such risk factors. Meanwhile, DHCs assist and refer eligible persons to doctors who have enrolled under the Government cancer screening programmes and have been enlisted in the Primary Care Directory for receiving screening services. The PHO also actively promotes the role of family doctors and encourages the public to pair with a family doctor, through which the family doctor will act as their personal health manager to develop personalised health plans with support and assistance from the DHCs. With reference to the Life Course Preventive Care Plan strategy, DHCs offer individualised health advices, which provide guidance on the health needs of the citizens across different life stages.

(3) The CEWG regularly reviews local and international scientific evidence with a view to making recommendations to the Government on formulating evidence-based measures for cancer prevention and screening programmes applicable to the local population. From the public health perspective, the Government must carefully assess various factors when considering whether to implement a screening programme for a specific cancer with reference to evidence-based public health risk assessment and advice from the relevant experts. These include local prevalence of the cancer concerned, accuracy and safety of the relevant screening tests, effectiveness in reducing incidence and mortality rates, feasibility of implementing a screening programme, taking into account the perspective of optimising the use of the healthcare resources to determine the priority. Excessive screening under public health programme not only wastes resources for the overall public health, but also runs out of resources that can be invested on other projects in greater need, and may pose unnecessary health risks to individuals.

The Government regularly reviews and evaluates the effectiveness of screening programmes and formulates appropriate screening strategy. Currently, the Government has implemented the CRCSP, Cervical Screening Programme and Breast Cancer Screening Pilot Programme. The Government will continue to make reference from the recommendations of the CEWG to consider implementing other suitable cancer screening programmes.

In fact, primary prevention (i.e. reducing exposure to cancer risk factors) is the most important strategy for reducing the risk of developing cancer. The DH has all along been adopting a multi-pronged approach such as publicity, education, promotion, legislation and regulation to promote healthy lifestyles, including avoidance of smoking and alcohol, healthy diet, regular physical activities and maintenance of a healthy body weight and waist circumference to reduce the risks of non-communicable diseases including cancer.

Red flag hoisted at Kadoorie Beach

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (May 22) that the Environmental Protection Department has classified the water quality at Kadoorie Beach in Tuen Mun District as Grade 4, which means the beach is not suitable for swimming. The red flag has been hoisted. Beachgoers are advised not to swim at the beach until further notice.

LCQ5: Permits for Proceeding to Hong Kong and Macao

Following is a question by the Hon Ma Fung-kwok and a reply by the Acting Secretary for Security, Mr Michael Cheuk, in the Legislative Council today (May 22):

Question:

There are views that holders of Permits for Proceeding to Hong Kong and Macao (commonly known as One-way Permits (OWPs)) coming to Hong Kong are the new blood in replenishing Hong Kong's workforce. However, according to government figures, the daily quota of 150 for OWPs has not been fully utilised in recent years, and the proportions of OWP holders (OWPHs) aged between 25 and 44 as well as those who have worked in the Mainland have both shrunk. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of first-time arrivals on OWPs to Hong Kong in the past three years, together with a tabulated breakdown by work experience, place of origin, pursuing further studies after arrival in Hong Kong and taking up employment after arrival in Hong Kong; the number of such arrivals who subsequently returned to live in the Mainland;

(2) given that the Government's statistics have shown that the greatest difficulty for OWPHs in adapting to life in Hong Kong is work, and the support services most needed by them are assistance in seeking employment and career training, whether the Government has steered new arrivals to join the

industries currently plagued by labour shortages and provided them with corresponding training, so as to enable their early integration into the Hong Kong society to become a new force in Hong Kong's labour market; and

(3) as there are views pointing out that population growth in the Mainland is gradually slowing down and its socio-economic conditions are improving continuously, coupled with the under-utilisation of the daily OWP quota in recent years, whether the authorities have conducted any review of the OWP system and explored with relevant Mainland authorities the feasibility of adjusting the OWP quota?

Reply:

President,

Regarding the question raised by the Hon Ma Fung-kwok, having consulted the Home and Youth Affairs Bureau and the Labour and Welfare Bureau, our consolidated reply is as follows:

It is stipulated in Article 22(4) of the Basic Law that "For entry into the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), people from other parts of China must apply for approval. Among them, the number of persons who enter the Region for the purpose of settlement shall be determined by the competent authorities of the Central People's Government after consulting the government of the Region." The provisions of this Article, in accordance with the interpretation by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress in 1999, mean that Mainland residents "who wish to enter the HKSAR for whatever reason, must apply to the relevant authorities of their residential districts for approval in accordance with the relevant national laws and administrative regulations, and must hold valid documents issued by the relevant authorities before they can enter the HKSAR".

Mainland residents who wish to settle in Hong Kong for family reunion must apply for Permits for Proceeding to Hong Kong and Macao (commonly known as One-way Permits (OWPs)) from the relevant authorities at the places of their household registration on the Mainland. The policy objective of OWP scheme is to allow Mainland residents to come to Hong Kong for family reunion in an orderly manner.

(1) The Immigration Department collects data on the demographic and social characteristics of all OWP holders when they first enter Hong Kong at the Lo Wu Control Point. The Home Affairs Department (HAD) has also been conducting regular surveys on new arrivals aged 11 and above from the Mainland who have arrived in Hong Kong for less than one year to identify their profile and service needs. The information collected in the two surveys is uploaded onto the website of the HAD in the form of quarterly reports for reference by relevant Government departments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in planning services for new arrivals. The reports are also available for public reference.

The number of OWP holders arriving in Hong Kong from 2021 to 2023 and

their demographic and social characteristics are at Annex. The Government does not keep track of their education and employment status after their arrival in Hong Kong.

OWP holders having come to settle in Hong Kong can enter and exit Hong Kong and the Mainland with relevant identity/travel documents. As Hong Kong continues to integrate actively into the country's overall development, there are bound to be more frequent exchanges between the residents of the two places. The Government does not maintain statistics on OWP holders travelling to the Mainland after arriving in Hong Kong.

(2) In general, new arrivals holding OWPs will go to the Registration of Persons Office a few days after arriving in Hong Kong to apply for personal documents and complete relevant questionnaires of the HAD. In 2023, nearly 60 per cent of these new arrivals were aged between 25 and 54. The Government fully understands that they would like to obtain information on employment upon their arrival in Hong Kong. In fact, relevant Government departments have been providing various kinds of support services to new arrivals from the Mainland.

Regarding training and employment support, the Employees Retraining Board (ERB) provides suitable training and employment services to eligible local employees aged 15 or above, including new arrivals. Apart from general training courses, eligible new arrivals may also enroll in courses tailored for them in order to acquire understanding of the community resources, an overview of local job market, work culture, etc. In 2023-2024, there were over 800 enrolments of new arrivals in these tailored courses, with a placement rate of nearly 90 per cent among those having completed the placement-tied courses.

In addition, the ERB Service Centre located in Tin Shui Wai offers instant, targeted and diversified self-help and support services to those with training and employment needs, including language and generic skills workshops, and mutual support groups for new arrivals.

The Labour Department (LD) provides diversified and free employment services to assist job seekers, including new arrivals, in securing employment. New arrivals can visit LD's job centres and industry-based recruitment centres to obtain employment services. In addition, LD sets up a "Dedicated Webpage for Mainland New Arrivals to Hong Kong" on its Interactive Employment Service website, which provides employment information. The employment programmes implemented by LD, including the Employment Programme for the Elderly and Middle-aged, Youth Employment and Training Programme, Work Orientation and Placement Scheme, and Re-employment Allowance Pilot Scheme to be launched on July 15 this year, provide employment support to them and assist them in entering the employment market.

Regarding community integration, the HAD provides a wide range of services through district networks and NGOs to help new arrivals integrate into the community. These services include organising activities for Mainland residents applying for OWPs to come to Hong Kong to let them first have a

better understanding of the living environment in Hong Kong; organising activities for new arrivals to learn more about the situation in the local community; organising computer training classes, Cantonese/English workshops, etc, to provide them with practical knowledge, as well as providing them with access to information on relevant public services through talks, exhibitions and distribution of guidebooks.

(3) The current 150 daily quota for OWPs is the upper limit. The Mainland authorities issue OWPs in accordance with the actual number of eligible applications submitted and strictly follow the vetting criteria. The 150 quota will not necessarily be used up. There are different views in the community on the 150 daily quota for OWPs, including views for maintaining, increasing or reducing the quota. Some of the views include advocating early settlement of Mainland family members of Hong Kong residents in Hong Kong for family reunion.

The overall usage of OWP quota is indeed affected by various factors, including the apparent reduction in the past few years due to the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. With the resumption of normal travel between Hong Kong and the Mainland, we note that the number of OWP holders arriving in Hong Kong has resumed in 2023, with an average of 112 persons per day, close to the pre-epidemic average of 116 persons and 107 persons per day in 2018 and 2019 respectively.

In the past decade, cross-boundary marriages made up about one-third of the registered marriages in Hong Kong. With Hong Kong's active integration into the country's overall development and more convenient travel between Hong Kong and the Mainland, together with more frequent exchanges between Hong Kong and Mainland residents, we believe that the proportion of cross-boundary marriages may continue to increase. Therefore, we should keep an eye on the trend in the long run. Moreover, given the current criteria of the Mainland authorities, Mainland spouses are required to wait for a certain period of time before becoming eligible to come to Hong Kong on OWPs. As such, there is a need to continue the arrangement of allowing separated spouses and their children born in the Mainland to come to Hong Kong for family reunion through the OWP system.

The Government will continue to keep a close watch on the usage of OWP quota and, taking into account the views of different sectors of the community and having regard to the overall interests of Hong Kong, continue to reflect to the Mainland authorities its views on matters relating to OWPs.

Thank you, President.

Opening remarks by SJ at forum titled Hong Kong – The Common Law Gateway for UAE Businesses to China and Beyond in Dubai, UAE (English only)

Following are the opening remarks by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC, at the forum titled Hong Kong – The Common Law Gateway for UAE Businesses to China and Beyond in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), today (May 22, Dubai time):

His Excellency Abdullah (Minister of Justice of the UAE, Mr Abdullah bin Sultan bin Awad Al Nuaimi), His Excellency Mohammad (President and CEO of the Dubai Chambers, Mr Mohammad Ali Rashed Lootah), His Excellency Ambassador Zhang (Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the People's Republic of China to the UAE, Mr Zhang Yiming), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. I would like to begin by welcoming all of you to this forum co-organised by the Department of Justice, the Hong Kong Trade Development Council and the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Dubai. And of course, I wish to express my gratitude to the Dubai Chambers as a co-organiser, and all the supporting organisations including entities coming from Hong Kong and UAE.

In the next few minutes, I wish to tell you very briefly who we are, why we are here, and what you are going to hear from us this morning. Now, we are the Hong Kong delegation led by me, consisting of more than 30 persons coming from both the Government and the private sector. In so far as the Government is concerned, apart from colleagues coming from the Department of Justice, we have the Director-General of Invest Hong Kong, which is responsible for promoting overseas investment in Hong Kong. And we have colleagues coming from the Economic and Trade Office in Dubai. We also have the leader of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, which is a statutory body of Hong Kong responsible for promoting trade and development.

Now turning to the private sector. I am very honoured to be joined by the leaders of the two legal professional bodies from Hong Kong, namely the Hong Kong Bar Association and the Law Society of Hong Kong. And we also have very top lawyers specialised in different areas ranging from commercial, merger and acquisition, setting up of companies, IPO (initial public offering), up to, for example, dispute resolution. In addition, we also have the person-in-charge of the leading arbitration institution from Hong Kong and the person-in-charge of the listing division of the Hong Kong Stock Exchange. So we do have a diversity of top professionals coming from my jurisdiction.

We are here today to accomplish a very important mission. The mission is

to promote and to establish a better and closer relationship between UAE and Hong Kong, in particular in the area of legal co-operation. This very important mission has to be considered in the context of Hong Kong being a special administrative region of China.

The UAE and China have a very strong history of friendship, dating back to the days of the ancient Silk Road. The modern Silk Road is under construction between the two countries. And in this very important construction work, Hong Kong plays a very significant role. Under the principle of "one country, two systems", Hong Kong enjoys many unique advantages and characteristics, one of which is our common law system. Hong Kong is the only common law jurisdiction in China. And that is why under various important national development plans of China, Hong Kong has been assigned to be the international legal and dispute resolution services centre. Hong Kong has very often been described as a "super connector" and a "super value-adder" between China and countries outside China. The natural question is how exactly can Hong Kong perform the role as a "super connector"? How to connect the rest of the world with China? And at the same time, how can we add value to co-operation between China and other countries?

And that takes me to the last point – what you are going to hear from us today. The theme of today is Hong Kong – The Common Law Gateway for UAE Businesses to China and Beyond. It is a gateway which serves as a platform that can take you from your country to China. And I suppose we can visualise the gateway as a highway in real life, but it's a very special and very unique highway in the sense that we can ensure that you will have fast, convenient and safe access to China. And more importantly, on the way, we will have a lot of service stations to ensure that you will have a pleasant journey. What I really mean is that, our legal system and our legal services can provide or act as a one-stop shop. We are ready, willing and able to provide top-quality, user-friendly and reliable legal services to enable you to explore business and investment opportunities, not just in Hong Kong, but in China as a whole. Starting from the point you consider to set up a business venture in Hong Kong, using it as a platform for investing in China for example, to the point of time where you wish to expand your business by IPOs, and to the moment when, unfortunately, some disputes arise and you have to resolve your dispute, and to the point you decided to reap the profit or fruits of your investment by leaving or terminating the relationship. So these are the sort of one-stop shop services that Hong Kong's common law system can offer, which cannot be found elsewhere.

Now, I hope I have said enough to whet your appetite. Many eminent speakers from the delegation will provide you with the essential details and information in due course.

The important thing about this forum, it is not just about the provision of information or exchange of views. In my view, what is crucial about this trip is that it has another more important meaning. In order to build and establish and maintain a long-term friendship and relationship, I truly believe that what is crucial is mutual understanding, mutual respect, and mutual trust and confidence. And I believe sincerity is the key to all these matters. I am not sure whether you have noticed, I have deliberately chosen

to wear a tie with the colour green, white and black this morning, because I know that these three colours are of great importance to your culture and to your country, representing core values such as growth, purity, peace, power and strength. And these happen to be very important values to the Chinese people as well.

You may wonder, what about the red colour, which also appears on your national flag? Because your national flag is of four colours – red, white, green and black. I have black, green and white on me. And apart from being the fourth colour of the national flag, the red colour is of great importance to Chinese people. But I don't feel I need to wear any red. It is because the red colour is represented and reflected by the very strong passion and the sincere wish and the heart of each and every member of my delegation to make friends in UAE and with all of you today.

So on this note, I wish to repeat my gratitude to all my friends in UAE who make this event successful. And I wish you a very fruitful and enjoyable forum, and I hope to see you at lunch. Thank you very much.