

Welcome speech by SFH at cocktail reception of College of Nursing Hong Kong (English only) (with photo)

Following is the welcome speech by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, at the Cocktail Reception of the College of Nursing Hong Kong (CNHK) today (June 28) in Singapore:

â€‹Distinguished guests, friends and colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

â€‹ Good evening.

â€‹ Thanks to the CNHK for inviting me to attend this Cocktail Reception. I wish to express my warm welcome to every one of you here.

â€‹ The overarching theme for this year's International Council of Nurses Congress is "Beyond Healthcare to Health". It will take a closer look at the causes of ill health, prevention and public health, and highlight the critical and leading roles that nurses play in addressing challenges including innovations in health and new models of nursing care.

â€‹ Hong Kong enjoys a safe and sound public healthcare environment with accessible and quality healthcare services. Our healthcare system consistently fares well by international standards and is recognised for its credibility and efficiency. We all agree that a major part of such success, if not all, is due to the dedication and professionalism of our healthcare professionals. Nurses, being the backbone of our healthcare system and the integral part of the healthcare team, obviously deserve to claim much credit.

Nurses in Hong Kong

â€‹ Hong Kong nurses, comprising registered nurses and enrolled nurses, constitute more than half of the healthcare workforce in Hong Kong. As at March 31, 2019, there were about 56 800 nurses, comprising 42 500 registered nurses and 14 300 enrolled nurses, or alternatively interpreted as 52 300 general nurses and 4 500 psychiatric nurses and 11 nurses of other streams.

Nurse Training

â€‹ Nursing education in Hong Kong used to be provided by hospital-based nursing schools in earlier years, when nursing training followed an apprenticeship system under which students learned while working full-time in the wards, supplemented by structured classroom study. It was in the early 1990s that universities started to offer undergraduate degree and higher diploma nursing programmes.

â€‹ Today, there is a strong and vibrant self-financing sector dedicated

to nurse training, in addition to nursing programmes offered by publicly funded institutions. All in all, there are some 3 400 nursing training places offered each year in Hong Kong amongst which over 50 per cent are at master or bachelor degree levels.

â€‹ The Hong Kong Government attaches great importance to the training of healthcare professionals, including nurses. Nurturing talents has always been of paramount importance to the sustainability of our healthcare system. We shall continue to increase healthcare training places and capacity by upgrading and increasing healthcare training facilities of relevant universities.

Professional Development

â€‹ The Hong Kong Government places professional development of the nursing sector on a high agenda. We have published the report of the first territory-wide Strategic Review on Healthcare Manpower Planning and Professional Development in June 2017. We have invited the regulatory bodies, including the Nursing Council of Hong Kong, to submit proposals to the Government on how to take forward the recommendations in the Report, including mandatory continuing professional education.

Nursing Specialisation

â€‹ In today's fast evolving healthcare arena, the role of nurses would need to be expanded and nursing specialisation is a necessary development. Currently, there are different avenues for advanced nursing practice or specialty training and these avenues and initiatives could complement each other in facilitating the development of nursing specialisation in Hong Kong. The Government thus has invited the Nursing Council of Hong Kong, the regulatory body of the profession, to implement a voluntary registration scheme for the development of nursing specialisation in order to pave the way for setting up an appropriate statutory registration system in Hong Kong.

Non-communicable Diseases

â€‹ I note that health promotion and disease prevention are also important sub-themes of the Congress. The Hong Kong Government is striving to achieve the targets set in "Towards 2025: Strategy and Action Plan to Prevent and Control Non-communicable Diseases in Hong Kong" to reduce the burden posed by non-communicable diseases through promoting healthy diet and physical activities and reducing alcohol and tobacco-related harms, as well as strengthening the healthcare system. We will continue to encourage government bureaux and departments to lead by example.

â€‹ It remains for me to thank CNHK for hosting this reception and giving me this valuable opportunity to meet all of you. And my warmest congratulations to ICN in putting together this prestigious event.

â€‹ I trust that these five days of peer learning and knowledge exchange

will be rewarding and constructive for all of you. Thank you.

