

Means test mechanism of Samaritan Fund and Community Care Fund medical assistance programmes enhanced

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The Hospital Authority (HA) today (January 15) welcomed the Commission on Poverty's approval to include new drugs and a medical device (seven self-financed cancer drugs and one medical device related to percutaneous coronary intervention) in medical assistance programmes under the Community Care Fund (CCF) as well as in the budget of relevant programmes next year. The Commission on Poverty also approved enhancement measures for the means test mechanism of medical assistance programmes.

The spokesperson for the HA said, "The Commission on Poverty has endorsed enhancement measures for the means test mechanism of medical assistance programmes under the CCF. For the programme on Subsidy for Eligible Patients to Purchase Ultra-expensive Drugs, including those for treating uncommon disorders, the enhancement measures are applicable for applications under this programme submitted from January 2019. With the implementation of the enhancement measures, it is anticipated that the financial burden of patients' households on medical expenses will be alleviated.

"In addition, for the Samaritan Fund (SF), CCF Medical Assistance Programme (First Phase Programme) and the Subsidy for Eligible Patients of HA to Purchase Specified Implantable Medical Devices for Interventional Procedures, the enhancement measures on means test will take effect on February 16."

The spokesperson said a consultancy study was commissioned in December 2017 to review the existing means test mechanism for SF and CCF Medical Assistance Programmes. Based on the review findings, the Government and the HA will introduce enhancement measures to the existing means test mechanism, which include modifying the calculation of annual disposable financial resources for drug subsidy applications and refining the definition of "household" adopted in financial assessments. The enhancement measures are also applicable to patients who are subsidised by the Funds and for contributing to part of the drug cost upon implementation of the enhancement measures. The HA will write to inform these patients individually about the details of the arrangement, as well as posting the details on the HA website.

Members of the public or people in need may ask medical social workers at public hospitals or visit the HA website for details of the SF and CCF Medical Assistance Programmes, as well as the enhancement measures for the means test mechanism. Details of the enhancement measures will also be

promulgated via posters in public hospitals.

Third-term Commission on Poverty convenes fourth meeting

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, chaired the fourth meeting of the third-term Commission on Poverty (CoP) this afternoon (January 15).

At the meeting, the CoP noted the implementation progress of various assistance programmes and the financial position of the Community Care Fund (CCF) and endorsed the arrangement of renewal of a \$7 billion deposit of out the \$10 billion deposit with the Hong Kong Monetary Authority due in July 2019. In addition, the CoP endorsed a revision of the budget for an existing assistance programme and extension of two others. The CoP also approved the introduction of new drugs and a medical device for three Medical Assistance Programmes and their budget proposals as well as the recommendations to enhance the means test mechanism of the CCF Medical Assistance Programmes. Details are as follows:

Amendment of the budget of an existing assistance programme

(1) According to the latest data from the Social Welfare Department, it is estimated that the sum of allowance payment already made and predicted to be made under the Subsidy for Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Recipients Living in Rented Private Housing will exceed the original estimate. The CoP endorsed an amended budget under which a further \$6.23 million will be provided to continue the implementation of the project. The amended total budget is \$125.53 million;

Extension of existing assistance programmes

(2) The CoP endorsed the extension of cut-off date for new cases for the Cervical Cancer Vaccination Pilot Scheme by six months, from March 2019 to September 2019, to allow sufficient time for eligible young females (especially girls from Primary Six and up to the age of 18) to receive the vaccination. The CoP also endorsed an upward adjustment of the fixed vaccination service fee paid to the organisation responsible for vaccination starting from April 2019 from \$308 to \$320 per vaccination. No additional funding is required for the extended programme.

(3) The CoP agreed to extend the Elderly Dental Assistance Programme for three years to February 28, 2022. In addition, the target beneficiaries of the Programme will be expanded to cover all elderly persons receiving Old Age Living Allowance by lowering the age limit from 70 or above to 65 or above

starting from February 2019. The CoP also agreed to introduce enhancement measures, including relaxing the number of visits for other free dental services from one time to two times for elderly persons for whom removable dentures are not appropriate and raising the maximum number of claim applications for X-ray films in each case from four films to six films for each eligible dentist. The Programme will continue to provide free removable dentures and other related dental services to eligible elderly people. No additional funding is required for the above measures.

Agreement to approve the introduction of new drugs and a medical device and budgets under three Medical Assistance Programmes

(4) The CoP has approved to include seven specified self-financed cancer drugs (Ceritinib, Alectinib, Osimertinib, Palbociclib, Trastuzumab emtansine, Everolimus and Axitinib) under the First Phase Programme of Medical Assistance Programmes starting from mid-February 2019. It is expected that the introduction of the seven new drugs could benefit around 384 patients in the first 12 months after implementation. Currently, three self-financed cancer drugs (Gefitinib, Erlotinib and Afatinib) on the list of specified self-financed drugs will be covered by the scope of the Samaritan Fund after the effective date of including the abovementioned seven new drugs. The First Phase Programme covers a total of 22 self-financed cancer drugs for treatment of 14 types of cancers. The CoP has also passed the eighth budget of the First Phase Programme, which covered from April 2019 to March 2020 with a total funding of \$248.092 million.

(5) The CoP endorsed the budget for the second year of the programme of the Subsidy for Eligible Patients to Purchase Ultra-expensive Drugs (Including Those for Treating Uncommon Disorders) from April 2019 to March 2020, with a total provision of 143.736 million; and

(6) The CoP endorsed the addition of Impella, a percutaneous ventricular assistance device for high-risk percutaneous coronary intervention procedures, under the programme of the Subsidy for Eligible Patients of Hospital Authority to Purchase Specified Implantable Medical Devices for Interventional Procedures. Applications will be accepted from mid-February 2019. With a total subsidy of around \$5.01 million, the initiative is expected to benefit about 25 patients in the first 12 months upon implementation. The CoP also endorsed the budget for the second year of the programme from April 2019, to March 2020, with a total provision of \$22.177 million; and

Enhancement measures for the financial assessment mechanism of CCF Medical Assistance Programmes

(7) The CoP agreed to revise the mean test mechanism of the medical assistance programmes in determining whether a patient is a dependent member of a household or not. Under the refined definition of "household", if the applicant is a non-dependent patient who is married, the family members will only comprise the spouse and dependent children under the same roof. The CoP endorsed the calculation of the annual disposable financial resources for

drug subsidy applications, under which 50 per cent of patients' disposable capital is discounted after deducting the deductible allowance. The enhancement measures will relieve the financial burden of patients' families arising from expenditure on medical treatment and avoid potential friction caused by requiring family members to disclose their assets.

Members were also briefed on the implementation and effectiveness of the "Be a Government Official for a Day" programme debuted last year and its work plan for 2019. They noted that 34 senior secondary students selected for participating in the programme were matched to shadow three Secretaries and 13 Bureau Directors of the Government and all of the participating students and officials showed a positive response.

The programme offered an invaluable opportunity for officials to exchange views direct with young people so that they could enhance mutual understanding. This fully tied in with a key policy theme of the current-term Government – connecting with young people. In view of the enthusiastic response and positive feedback, Mr Cheung said that the Government will continue to implement the programme this year with an extended scale to cover more senior officials. The Chief Executive, Under Secretaries, Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments will also participate in the programme to enable more students to join. The 2019 programme will be implemented in two phases. The first phase of the programme will be held during the Easter holidays, and recruitment will commence in January. The second phase of the programme will be held during the summer holidays.

In addition, members noted that the annual Commission on Poverty Summit chaired by the Chief Executive will be held between March or April 2019.

They provided comments on the theme, programme and overall arrangements of the Summit. Some members also expressed views on elderly Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme.

HKMA, Research Bureau of PBoC and HKGFA jointly hold Green Finance in Action study tour (with photos)

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA), the Research Bureau of the People's Bank of China (PBoC) and the Hong Kong Green Finance Association (HKGFA) co-organised the "Green Finance in Action" Hong Kong study tour for more than 120 representatives of potential green bond issuers from Mainland China from January 13 to 15, which is aimed at facilitating their issuing

green bonds in Hong Kong.

The study tour included policy and regulatory briefings by senior representatives from the HKMA, the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau, the PBoC, the China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission and the State Administration of Foreign Exchange, as well as seminars by banks, investors and service providers on the latest market developments. Participating Mainland issuer representatives also attended the Deal Flow Matchmaking Session at the Asian Financial Forum organised by the Hong Kong Trade Development Council.

The Executive Director (External) of the HKMA, Mr Vincent Lee, said, "Hong Kong has always been the gateway between Mainland China and the rest of the world. It is uniquely positioned to connect the strong demands for green funding from Mainland China, and for green investment opportunities from international green investors. Hong Kong has a vibrant green bond market, with issuance exceeding USD8 billion in the first three quarters of 2018, of which about 60 per cent were by Mainland issuers. By issuing green bonds in Hong Kong, Mainland issuers can benefit from Hong Kong's world class financial platform, international investor network, and supportive government initiatives. The HKMA will continue to work with our Mainland counterparts to promote and facilitate Mainland enterprises issuing green bonds in Hong Kong."

The Deputy Director-General of the Research Bureau of the PBoC, Mr Zhou Chengjun, said, "Mainland entities issuing green bonds in Hong Kong will bring multiple benefits to the Mainland and Hong Kong: it will facilitate Mainland enterprises and institutions securing international financing, strengthen corporate governance, and enhance their integration into the international capital market. At the same time, it will promote the development and compliance of the Mainland green securities market, promote Hong Kong's status as an international financial centre, and broaden the scope of international investors that can share the benefits from the Mainland's economic growth. The PBoC and HKMA will further strengthen co-operation with a view to streamlining issuance process, enhancing product innovation and investor incentives, as well as promoting the gradual harmonisation of Mainland and international green bond standards, and will continue to encourage co-operation and interconnection between the Mainland and Hong Kong green bond markets."

The Chairman and President of the HKGFA, Mr Ma Jun, said, "Hong Kong has a broad base of global institutional investors who are interested in green bonds. The Government has launched a series of incentive schemes for bond (especially green bond) issuance. Mainland companies and projects should make full use of Hong Kong as a financing channel. The Hong Kong Green Finance Association will work closely with the Government and the Hong Kong Monetary Authority to promote Hong Kong's green bond market in the Mainland and abroad, and strive to build a premier green bond market with scale and global influence in Hong Kong."



Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected cannabis buds (with photo)

Hong Kong Customs seized about 2 kilograms of suspected cannabis buds with an estimated market value of about \$410,000 at Hong Kong International Airport on January 12.

Customs officers inspected a parcel arriving in Hong Kong from the US on January 12 and seized the batch of suspected cannabis buds inside the parcel.

After follow-up investigation, Customs officers yesterday (January 14) arrested a 21-year-old man in Sham Shui Po suspected to be in connection with the case.

Investigation is ongoing and the arrested man has been released on bail pending further investigation.

Under the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance, trafficking in a dangerous drug is a serious offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$5 million and life imprisonment.

Customs also reminds that cannabis and tetrahydro-cannabinol (THC) are

classified as dangerous drugs under the Ordinance. Importation of products (including food and drinks) containing cannabis or THC into Hong Kong is prohibited unless the relevant provisions in the Ordinance are complied with. In order to avoid breaching the law inadvertently, special attention should be paid to the packaging labels of food and drinks.

Members of the public may report any suspected drug trafficking activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).



Suspected MERS case reported

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (January 15) reported a suspected case of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), and again urged the public to pay special attention to safety during travel, taking due consideration of the health risks in the places they visit. The case is detailed below:

Sex	Female
Age	58
Affected area involved	Dubai, United Arab Emirates
High-risk exposure	Nil
Hospital	Princess Margaret Hospital
Condition	Stable
MERS-Coronavirus preliminary test result	Pending

"Travellers to the Middle East should avoid going to farms, barns or markets with camels; avoid contact with sick persons and animals, especially camels, birds or poultry; and avoid unnecessary visits to healthcare facilities. We strongly advise travel agents organising tours to the Middle East to abstain from arranging camel rides and activities involving direct contact with camels, which are known risk factors for acquiring MERS Coronavirus (MERS-CoV)," a spokesman for the CHP said.

Locally, the CHP's surveillance with public and private hospitals, with practising doctors and at boundary control points is firmly in place. Inbound travellers and members of the public who recently visited the Middle East and developed fever or lower respiratory symptoms within 14 days will be classified as suspected MERS cases. They will be taken to public hospitals for isolation and management until their specimens test negative for MERS-CoV.

Travellers to affected areas should maintain vigilance, adopt appropriate health precautions and take heed of personal, food and environmental hygiene. The public may visit the MERS pages of the [CHP](#) and its [Travel Health Service](#), MERS statistics in [affected areas](#), the CHP's [Facebook Page](#) and [YouTube Channel](#), and the World Health Organization's [latest news](#) for more information and health advice. Tour leaders and tour guides operating overseas tours are advised to refer to the CHP's [health advice on MERS](#).