

LCQ16: Healthcare services provided by Central Government-Aided Emergency Hospital

Following is a question by the Hon Judy Chan and a written reply by the Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, in the Legislative Council today (March 19):

Question:

Since April 2023, the Hospital Authority (HA) has started using the Central Government-Aided Emergency Hospital (CGAEH) located in the Lok Ma Chau Loop for the provision of ambulatory services, and has launched the Ambulatory Diagnostic Radiology Service Pilot Programme (the Pilot Programme) to invite patients with suitable clinical conditions to switch to CGAEH to receive radiological diagnostic services. Subsequently, HA has gradually expanded the services of CGAEH, including extending the service scope of the Pilot Programme to cover patients referred by all public hospitals in Hong Kong, introducing Magnetic Resonance Imaging services for thyroid eye disease, and providing imaging examination services with the use of two Ultrasonography machines and three Computed Tomography scanners. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it knows the number of patients who received radiological diagnostic services at CGAEH each year since the launch of the Pilot Programme, together with a breakdown by the hospital cluster to which the patients belonged;
- (2) whether it knows the waiting situation for and the number of cases handled by HA's radiology services in each of the past three years, together with a breakdown by hospital cluster;
- (3) whether it knows the number of various types of medical equipment in CGAEH since its operation and the dates on which they were commissioned;
- (4) whether it knows the existing and future medical services provided by CGAEH;
- (5) whether it knows the patronage of the shuttle bus provided by HA for transportation to and from CGAEH in the past year; and
- (6) as a member of the public who belongs to a hospital cluster outside the New Territories has told me that even though the Pilot Programme has now been extended to cover patients referred by all public hospitals in Hong Kong, he has not yet been arranged to receive radiological diagnostic services at CGAEH, whether the Government knows if there are similar cases; if there are, of the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Hospital Authority (HA), the consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon Judy Chan is as follows:

The Central Government-Aided Emergency Hospital (the Emergency Hospital) located in the Lok Ma Chau Loop was commissioned for construction by the Central Government during the fifth wave of the COVID-19 epidemic in Hong Kong and handed over to the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region on December 30, 2022, for operation and management. With Hong Kong having returned to normalcy, the Government handed over the Emergency Hospital to the HA for planning of day hospital services, with the New Territories East Cluster (NTEC) tasked with the management and operation of the hospital, so as to make good use of resources gifted by the Central Government. The Government and the HA will dovetail with the progress and need of land use development in the Loop and continue to arrange optimal use of relevant resources.

The HA subsequently launched the Ambulatory Diagnostic Radiology Service Pilot Programme (the Programme) in April 2023, with a view to shortening the waiting time of patients and alleviating the pressure on the radiology services of public hospitals. The Programme was first implemented in the NTEC and subsequently extended to patients of all public hospitals in Hong Kong. Under the Programme, various cluster hospitals actively select suitable patients who are waiting for investigations, including non-emergency and non-hospitalised patients with stable conditions who are self-ambulatory, and invite them to participate in the Programme on a voluntary basis, so that various clusters can make available resources to expedite handling of urgent cases with a view to shortening the waiting time. Invitations are issued by various cluster hospitals, rather than patients making applications themselves. Those who do not fulfil the above criteria will not receive invitations.

As at the end of December 2024 since the inception of the Programme, more than 24 000, 5 300 and 5 600 patients have undergone Computed Tomography (CT), Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), and Ultrasonography services in the Emergency Hospital respectively. The waiting time (median) of patients participating in the Programme (investigations undergone and appointments booked) has also improved, with the waiting time for CT patients shortened from 108 weeks to about 25 weeks (Note), that for MRI patients from 118 weeks to about 36 weeks (Note), and that for Ultrasonography patients from 165 weeks to about 56 weeks (Note). The number of patients receiving diagnostic radiology services in the Emergency Hospital by clusters is set out at Annex I. The HA's waiting situation for radiological services and number of cases handled by clusters are set out at Annexes II and III.

Apart from the above diagnostic radiological services, the HA has also progressively rolled out other services in the Emergency Hospital over the past year or so, including endoscopy, sleep study, microbiological tests and 25-hydroxyvitamin D analysis, and will commence intravitreal injection service with a view to optimising the use of medical facilities in the hospital. The quantity of major medical equipment in the Emergency Hospital

and their commissioning dates are set out at Annex IV.

To facilitate patients using the services, the Emergency Hospital provides free shuttle buses to transport patients between designated MTR stations and the hospital. Except public holidays, there are about 10 shuttle bus trips daily between Sheung Shui MTR station and the hospital from Mondays to Saturdays, and about eight shuttle bus trips daily between Yuen Long MTR station and the hospital, as well as between Siu Hong MTR station and the hospital on Tuesdays and Thursdays. At present, the monthly number of shuttle bus passenger exceeds 10 000.

Note: Waiting time is counted from when a patient joins the waiting list at a public hospital.