

LCQ2: Accident and emergency services of public hospitals under Kowloon Central Cluster

Following is a question by the Hon Yang Wing-kit and a reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (January 19):

Question:

At present, the public hospitals located within the Wong Tai Sin (WTS) district do not provide accident and emergency (A&E) services, and the authorities have no plan to provide A&E services in Our Lady of Maryknoll Hospital (OLMH) upon redevelopment. As such, patients calling ambulance services in the WTS district will mainly be sent to hospitals outside the district, such as Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH), Kwong Wah Hospital, United Christian Hospital, or the New Acute Hospital at Kai Tak Development Area (New Acute Hospital) to be commissioned in the future for treatment. Some residents of the WTS district are worried that the long travelling trips may lead to delays in treatment. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of patients who boarded the ambulance in the WTS district and the average time taken from such patients' boarding the ambulance to their arrival at the A&E departments, in each of the past three years;

(2) whether it will coordinate the services of OLMH and the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Wong Tai Sin Hospital, so that the two hospitals can, upon redevelopment, provide more comprehensive specialist services and 24-hour A&E services; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) given that upon the completion of the New Acute Hospital, most of the services of QEH will be relocated to that hospital, and the original site of QEH will be used for medical purposes, whether the relevant purposes include A&E and specialist services; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

My reply to various parts of the Hon Yang Wing-kit's question is as follows:

(1) According to the information provided by the Fire Services Department (FSD) in relation to the ambulance services in Wong Tai Sin (WTS) District, the number of patients who boarded FSD's ambulances in WTS district in 2019,

2020 and 2021 were 38 429, 21 073 and 36 497 respectively. The average time it took from patients' boarding the ambulance to their arrival at the Accident and Emergency (A&E) department of the relevant hospitals are 22 minutes and 41 seconds, 21 minutes and 29 seconds, and 22 minutes and 54 seconds respectively.

(2) The Hospital Authority (HA) plans and develops public healthcare services and facilities on a cluster basis, taking into account a number of factors, including the service, the roles of different hospitals within a cluster, the service development plan of the hospitals, as well as the coordination of healthcare services and facilities in a cluster. This is to ensure that all hospitals within the cluster can perform according to their defined roles and provide appropriate healthcare services for local residents.

To cater for Hong Kong's overall healthcare demand in the next 10 to 20 years, the Government and the HA have commenced implementation of the First 10-year Hospital Development Plan (HDP) since 2016, for which \$200 billion has been earmarked for a total of 16 projects to provide over 6 000 additional beds and 94 additional operating theatres, as well as to increase service capacity of specialist outpatient clinics and general outpatient clinics. The Government subsequently announced in the 2018 Policy Address that the HA has been invited to start planning for the Second 10-year HDP.

The Kowloon Central Cluster (KCC), where the WTS district belongs, currently comprises nine hospitals/institutions, including Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH) and Kwong Wah Hospital which are both equipped with A&E departments. The HA has set the development direction of healthcare services in WTS district in accordance with the Clinical Services Plan for the KCC. The Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Wong Tai Sin Hospital (WTS) has been identified as an extended care hospital and a tuberculosis and chest institution in the cluster which aims to provide trans-disciplinary rehabilitative training that enables its patients to reintegrate into the society. As for Our Lady of Maryknoll Hospital (OLMH), it is a community hospital that mainly serves the residents of WTS district and provides non-emergency services of various specialties.

The redevelopment of OLMH has been included in the First 10-year HDP and the preparatory works have commenced since September 2018. The HA plans to seek funding approval from the Finance Committee (FC) within the current session of the Legislative Council to carry out main works of the redevelopment. Subject to funding approval from the FC, the main works will commence and are expected to be completed in 2027 at the earliest. Upon the redevelopment of OLMH, the number of hospital beds will increase from the current provision of 236 to 437. Apart from providing in-patient services such as medicine and geriatrics, surgery, gynaecology, orthopaedics and palliative care, a new haemodialysis centre will be established, providing 16 day beds. The day surgery centre will be equipped with four operating theatres that meet current standards.

The planning for healthcare services and facilities should take into account a number of factors in a cluster, including the service supply and

demand, the roles and service development plans of different hospitals therein as well as the coordination of healthcare services and facilities. A number of related facilities including diagnostic radiology, operating theatres, intensive care unit and clinical laboratory services are required for setting up an A&E department in a hospital. Constrained by the hospital site area and topographical environment, WTSH and OLMH are not suitable to be converted into acute hospitals.

Based on the recommendation of the Clinical Services Plan for the KCC, the A&E service in WTS district will be provided by the New Acute Hospital (NAH) at the Kai Tak Development Area under the First 10-year HDP. The NAH will provide 2 400 in-patient beds and other medical and supporting facilities. The NAH is located in the heart of Kowloon and will form a service network with WTSH, OLMH and Hong Kong Buddhist Hospital to provide comprehensive healthcare services to the residents of WTS district.

The Government understands the public's aspiration for A&E service in the district. However, A&E service should mainly be used to handle urgent or serious trauma or severe illness, and should not be used as a substitute for general primary healthcare services. Treating A&E service as general primary healthcare services will not only overload public hospitals and prolong waiting time, it may also prevent people with genuine need for A&E service from receiving timely and suitable care. The Government will continue to strengthen and reform primary healthcare services, so that citizens in need can access primary medical services without having to rely on A&E service in public hospitals. The Government will set out our ideas and plans in the blueprint for the sustainable development of primary healthcare services within the current-term Government.

(3) Upon the completion of the NAH in the Kai Tak Development Area, most of the services of QEH, including A&E service, will be relocated to the NAH, and the Ambulatory Care Centre (Extension) at QEH will be retained. By that time, QEH's current site in King's Park will free up space for construction of new healthcare facilities. Such project has also been included in the Second 10-year HDP. Having regard to the completion date of the NAH, the HA will commence the overall development plan of the King's Park site in a timely manner based on the latest service demand projections and in line with the timetable of the Second 10-year HDP.