

Secretary for Health meets Hong Kong Dental Association to emphasise respect for profession and regulatory system of other regions

The Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, met with representatives of the Hong Kong Dental Association (HKDA) today (February 27) to listen to their views on the Elderly Health Care Voucher Greater Bay Area Pilot Scheme (Pilot Scheme). He also expressed his concern over the criticisms made by the HKDA on the Mainland dental profession (stomatology profession) and regulatory system while commenting on the Pilot Scheme.

Professor Lo emphasised, "The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government attaches great importance to the training and regulation of the dental profession. Similarly, the Mainland stomatologists, known as dentists in Hong Kong, have gone through comprehensive and standardised training which is recognised by the country. The stomatology profession is also regulated under the strict monitoring by the National Health Commission and health commissions/bureaux of various provinces and cities. I trust that the dental industry in Hong Kong would respect their counterparts in other regions, including those on the Mainland; and uphold the principles of mutual respect, mutual learning and exchange, with a view to promoting positive development of the profession.

"Citizens have a say in determining how well-received the dental profession in Hong Kong is within the community. I hope that dentists in Hong Kong would proactively promote further developments of the profession and their services, stay true to their aspiration in serving the public to fulfil the social responsibility, and continue joining hands with the Government in pushing forward with various initiatives for strengthening the city's dental services with a view to enhancing the overall oral health of citizens.

"The HKSAR Government has two objectives for implementing this Pilot Scheme. Firstly, it aims to provide more convenience for Hong Kong elderly persons residing in Mainland cities in the GBA by providing more service point options for them to use their Elderly Health Care Vouchers (EHCVs) to meet their primary healthcare needs. Secondly, it is intended to allow Hong Kong elderly persons to use their EHCVs for receiving dental services across the boundary at medical institutions in Shenzhen, with a view to addressing the pressing demand of Hong Kong elderly persons in seeking dental services, and thus to achieve a win-win situation."

Professor Lo stressed that the Government attaches great importance to the service quality of the pilot medical institutions under the Pilot Scheme. To this end, the medical institutions (including the dental institutions) were selected for inclusion through a robust process. From last November to early February this year, the Health Bureau and the Department of Health had

conducted market research, sought opinions and recommendations from the Health Commission of Guangdong Province, and conducted site visits for direct inspection of facilities, equipment and operation of the medical institutions as well as meetings with relevant senior management to gain a thorough understanding of the institutions' management structures and models as well as operation.

He added, "Since the launch of the Elderly Health Care Voucher Scheme (EHVS) at the University of Hong Kong-Shenzhen Hospital (HKU-SZH) by the Government in 2015, eligible elderly persons have been entitled to use EHCVs to receive dental services at the HKU-SZH during the past eight years or so. Under the Pilot Scheme, only two dental service points are added in Shenzhen while there are some 1 500 dentists in Hong Kong having enrolled in the EHVS and providing services at over 3 300 service points. Compared with the few service points in the GBA, local dentists are still the most accessible channel for Hong Kong elderly persons to seek dental services."