

SFH briefs healthcare sector on Policy Address initiatives related to healthcare manpower (with photos)

The Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, today (October 15) met with representatives of the Hong Kong Academy of Nursing to brief them on initiatives related to healthcare manpower and healthcare professional development in "The Chief Executive's 2021 Policy Address", and listened to their views and suggestions.

Professor Chan said, "The healthcare system in Hong Kong is renowned for its quality and reliability. Nevertheless, our healthcare system is facing many challenges, including the COVID-19 epidemic raging across the globe, an ageing population, the increasing number of diseases triggered by lifestyle, and ever-rising public expectations towards healthcare services.

"As stated by the Chief Executive in her Policy Address, to cope with these challenges, sufficient healthcare manpower is a must. The Government has been adopting a multi-pronged approach to enhance healthcare manpower, including increasing continuously the local healthcare training places offered by the University Grants Committee-funded universities and self-financing institutions, and admitting non-locally trained healthcare professionals, with a view to supporting the development of various healthcare services.

"In addition, we have to strengthen the roles of other healthcare professionals in the local healthcare system, in particular primary healthcare services. The Food and Health Bureau (FHB) will follow up at full speed to legislate to make continuing professional education and/or continuing professional development a mandatory requirement for supplementary medical professionals under the relevant ordinance, as well as for nurses and dentists proposed in the Policy Address, with a view to assuring the professional competence of healthcare professionals."

Professor Chan highlighted in the meeting the work of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government on the professional development of nurses. To shoulder the responsibility for the professional development of nurses and pave the way for setting up a statutory registration system for Advanced Practice Nurses in the long run, the Nursing Council of Hong Kong has accepted an invitation from the FHB to formulate and implement the Voluntary Scheme on Advanced and Specialised Nursing Practice. The Scheme, which has shown good progress, was launched early this year and is now open for application for all the 16 specialties. She urged the Council to encourage qualified nursing staff to submit applications.

"Furthermore, the Hospital Authority's new measure to create the rank of Associate Nurse Consultant in the nursing grade career structure can provide an alternative promotion pathway for nurses aspiring to develop a career in

specialty nursing, apart from the existing clinical management stream. The new grade structure will also facilitate continuous development in the nursing profession and promote the standard of nursing services."

She stressed, "The HKSAR Government will continue to implement various measures to increase healthcare manpower and promote professional development of healthcare staff for the sustainable development of the Hong Kong healthcare system."

Professor Chan will continue to brief stakeholders on initiatives related to the FHB in the Policy Address.

