

LCQ9: Provision of biologic therapy for psoriasis patients

Following is a question by the Dr Hon Helena Wong and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (May 30):

Question:

The dermatology specialist outpatient clinics under the Department of Health (DH) provide treatment for psoriasis patients, and refer patients of serious cases to the dermatology biologic therapy (biologic therapy) outpatient clinic at the Prince of Wales Hospital (PWH) for treatment. DH enhanced the referral mechanism in June 2016, tasking a medical consultant with the responsibility for assessing whether the psoriasis patients of clinics under DH meet the criteria for receiving biologic therapy so as to expedite referrals. However, there are currently more than 3 000 patients in Hong Kong who are suitable for receiving biologic therapy, but the number of such patients so referred since 2012 has been few and far between. On the other hand, the authorities plan to offer biologic therapy outpatient service at the Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital (Eastern Hospital) in the first quarter of 2018, but such plan has not yet been implemented. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of (i) the number of psoriasis patients referred by DH for receiving biologic therapy since the implementation of the aforesaid enhanced mechanism, and (ii) among such patients, the number of those who received biologic therapy subsequently and the percentage of this number in the number of serious psoriasis patients in Hong Kong;

(2) whether it knows the reasons why the Eastern Hospital has not yet introduced the biologic therapy outpatient service, and when such service will be introduced;

(3) whether it knows if the Hospital Authority will step up the service provided at PWH's dermatology biologic therapy outpatient clinic, including increasing the service hours and patient quota; and

(4) as a patient group has pointed out that psoriasis patients currently have to wait for 10 years on average before they receive treatment and thus will very likely miss the best timing for treatment, whether the authorities have comprehensively assessed the service needs of such patients; if so, of the assessment outcome; if not, whether they will conduct such assessment expeditiously?

Reply:

President,

Currently, treatment options for psoriasis are provided in accordance with evidence-based medical practice. The treatments include medicine for external use or oral administration, phototherapy and the newly introduced biologic therapy. Doctors will prescribe appropriate medicine according to the severity of patients' conditions, most of which can be controlled by using conventional treatment options (i.e. medicine for external use or oral administration and phototherapy).

Generally speaking, serious psoriasis patients seeking follow-up consultations at clinics providing specialist dermatology outpatient services under the Department of Health (DH) may be referred to the Hospital Authority (HA) for biologic therapy under the existing mechanism if their conditions cannot be effectively controlled by conventional treatments like medicine for external use or oral administration or phototherapy, or they have suffered from relatively serious adverse effects after receiving such treatments, provided that they do not have any contraindications to biologic therapy.

To provide appropriate treatments for serious psoriasis patients, the DH has enhanced the referral mechanism for these patients since June 2016. Under the enhanced mechanism, fast and direct referrals will be offered to serious psoriasis patients following the assessment by DH's specialists for appointments for the biologic therapy outpatient service at the Prince of Wales Hospital (PWH). Since the implementation of the enhanced mechanism, a total of four serious psoriasis patients have been referred by the DH to the PWH for biologic therapy.

To further enhance the existing service, the DH and the HA started to actively prepare for the provision of biologic therapy outpatient service at the Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital (Eastern Hospital) in September 2017. Preliminary testing of workflows was completed in early 2018, which covers the application of computer systems for basic clinic facilities such as those for medicine prescription, patient registration and fee collection, and the formulation of case referral procedures. The outpatient service will be provided directly by experienced healthcare personnel of DH's Social Hygiene Service, who have completed the training on the application of the systems. The DH and the HA are finalising the detailed arrangements for the overall operation of the biologic therapy outpatient service. It is expected that the clinic will come into operation soon to provide services for psoriasis patients.

The DH will continue to keep abreast of international guidelines and review the treatment options for psoriasis from time to time according to the latest situation in Hong Kong. Apart from the existing biologic therapy outpatient service provided by the PWH, the biologic clinic of the Eastern Hospital will come into operation soon. The DH will maintain close liaison with the HA to explore the relevance and feasibility of introducing the service at the specialist outpatient clinics of other HA hospitals.

LCQ7: Support services for single-parent families

Following is a question by the Hon Tony Tse and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, in the Legislative Council today (May 30):

Question:

The number of cases in which divorce decrees were granted by the court rose from 6 295 in 1991 to 17 196 in 2016, representing a rate of increase of 1.7 times. Moreover, there were 73 428 single parents in Hong Kong in 2016, of whom more than 30 per cent were recipients of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance. On the other hand, the Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs) of the Social Welfare Department (SWD) provide social services for single-parent families at present. However, there are comments that the services currently provided by IFSCs for single-parent families are neither comprehensive nor persistent. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of requests for assistance from single parents handled by the various IFSCs in each of the past five years, with a breakdown by (i) catchment district and (ii) type of issues pertaining to the requests for assistance, as well as the respective percentages of such numbers in the total; the average time taken for handling such cases; the criteria adopted by IFSCs for making the decision to close a case;

(2) of the current (i) staff establishment, (ii) average number of cases handled by each social worker, and (iii) annual operational expenditure, of each IFSC; whether SWD has reviewed the operation and staff establishment of IFSCs on a regular basis;

(3) given that IFSCs currently provide services through a district-based approach, whether the cases of the two parties of separated/divorced couples who reside in different catchment districts are handled by the social workers from different IFSCs; if so, how the authorities ensure that the social workers concerned maintain effective communication with each other in order to comprehensively assess the needs of such separated/divorced couples;

(4) given that SWD will set up five one-stop co-parenting support centres (CPSCs) to be operated by non-governmental organisations in the current financial year, of the (i) address, (ii) estimated annual expenditure, and (iii) staff establishment of each CPSC;

(5) of the number of cases for which services have been provided under the Pilot Project on Children Contact Service since its commencement in September 2016; given that SWD intends to regularise the project and incorporate the

relevant service into CPSC's scope of services, of the relevant details and implementation timetable;

(6) whether it will set up specialised service units (e.g. one-stop support centres for single-parent families) to provide comprehensive support services for separated/divorced families; and

(7) given that default in alimony payments is a major problem faced by single-parent families, whether the Government will consider setting up a managing organisation or monitoring mechanism for alimony to help address the problem?

Reply:

President,

After consulting the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB), my consolidated reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) The number of cases involving single-parent families handled by the Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs) of the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and the percentage of such cases in the total number of cases in the past five years are tabulated below:

Year (Note)	Cases involving single-parent families	Percentage of such cases in the total number of cases
2013-14	4 690	19.20 per cent
2014-15	4 546	18.52 per cent
2015-16	4 312	17.59 per cent
2016-17	4 134	17.15 per cent
2017-18	4 260	17.07 per cent

Note: The figures for 2013-14 to 2016-17 were the numbers of cases as at March 31 of the respective years, whereas the figure for 2017-18 was the number of cases as at December 31, 2017.

The SWD does not have the breakdown of cases involving single-parent families by service district and by type of issues pertaining to the requests for assistance.

If it is concluded upon assessment by the IFSCs' social workers that no further assistance is required by the individuals concerned and their families, the social workers will close the cases with the consent of those individuals. If the individuals concerned and their families have other service needs due to changes in circumstances after the closure of cases, they may seek assistance from the IFSCs again. The SWD has not collated information on the average time for handling such cases.

(2) The SWD will, taking into account the service needs and characteristics

of different districts, arrange suitable manpower for the IFSCs, including officers-in-charge (Social Work Officer rank), frontline social workers (including Assistant Social Work Officers, Senior Social Work Assistants and Social Work Assistants) and auxiliary staff (including Assistant Clerical Officers, Clerical Assistants and Workman IIs). At present, the staffing establishment of each IFSC, in accordance with district service needs, case complexity and caseload arrangements, is in the range of 21 to 36 posts.

As the nature of cases is getting more and more complicated, the SWD has from time to time enhanced social worker manpower for the IFSCs since the adoption of the integrated family service mode. To introduce the concepts of co-parenting and parental responsibility as early as possible, enhance parents' capability in coping with divorce as well as strengthen family functioning through district-level coordination, the SWD will strengthen the manpower of IFSCs in 2018-19, increasing the number of social workers serving in the IFSCs from 679 in 2004-05 to 833 in 2018-19. The SWD will continue to closely monitor the workload and manpower situation of the IFSCs, and allocate more resources when necessary.

The estimated Government expenditure on the IFSCs operated by the SWD and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for 2018-19 is \$1.0134 billion. In 2017-18 (as at the end of December 2017), the average number of cases handled by each IFSC's social worker per month was 36.5.

(3) For cases involving separated/divorced families, if family members are living in different districts, the IFSCs' social workers will, with the consent of the individuals concerned, contact the social workers of other service units serving the same families. Social workers from the two service units will interact and coordinate with each other to conduct comprehensive assessment on the needs of the individuals concerned and their families, and with their best interests taken into consideration, arrange joint interviews, home visits or case conferences, and arrange parents and their children to join groups and programmes that are specifically designed for them, so as to provide appropriate services and assistance for separated/divorced families.

(4) and (5) To strengthen co-parenting support for divorced/divorcing/separated parents and their children, the SWD plans to set up five specialised one-stop co-parenting support centres to be operated by NGOs, one each in the five clusters across the territory (i.e. Hong Kong Island, Kowloon East, Kowloon West, New Territories East and New Territories West), in the fourth quarter of 2018 at the earliest, with services including co-parenting counselling, parenting co-ordination, structured co-parenting groups or programmes, child-focused counselling/groups or programmes, as well as children contact service. Meanwhile, the SWD is evaluating the effectiveness of the Pilot Project on Children Contact Service (the Pilot Project) operated by the Hong Kong Family Welfare Society, and is planning to incorporate the Pilot Project into the new co-parenting support centres. As at mid-April 2018, a total of 105 cases had been served under the Pilot Project.

The above service projects are currently in the planning stage, with

details to be finalised.

(6) The SWD has no plans to set up one-stop support centres for single-parent families. However, the SWD will continue to make efforts to provide comprehensive support services for single-parent and separated/divorced families through the IFSCs and the co-parenting support centres to be set up soon.

(7) As advised by the HAB, the Government is committed to enhancing the effectiveness of the system of collecting maintenance payments and enforcing maintenance orders. The measures taken so far include relaxing the requirement for the court to make an Attachment of Income Order, imposing interest or surcharge against defaulting maintenance payers as well as stepping up publicity and education work.

The Government will commission a consultancy study through the Family Council to examine various issues relating to marriage and divorce, including the proposal of setting up a maintenance board, with a view to facilitating the consideration of the way forward. The study is expected to commence in mid-2018.

While the consultancy study is underway, the Government will continue to review and implement suitable measures to facilitate the enforcement of maintenance orders. These measures include increasing the amount of monthly maintenance that may be exempted from the Director of Legal Aid's First Charge, streamlining the referral procedures for recovery of arrears of maintenance by legal aid applicants, as well as launching publicity and education programmes on an ongoing basis.

LCQ8: Unsold first-hand private residential units

Following is a question by the Hon Dennis Kwok and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (May 30):

Question :

According to the Statistics on Private Housing Supply in Primary Market released by the Transport and Housing Bureau, as at the end of last year, there were 9 000 unsold units in the completed private buildings in the territory. On the other hand, the Collector of Stamp Revenue may grant, under section 45 of the Stamp Duty Ordinance (Cap. 117), stamp duty relief to an instrument that conveys or transfers a beneficial interest in an immovable property from one associated body corporate to another. In this connection,

will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether the aforesaid 9 000 unsold units include those leased out by the developers concerned; if so, of the number concerned; if not, the reasons for that;
- (2) of a breakdown of the aforesaid 9 000 unsold units by (i) name of development and (ii) the unit floor area classification used by the Rating and Valuation Department in compiling the statistics and, among such units, the number of those which were leased out by the developers concerned;
- (3) of the following information in respect of each of the developments mentioned in (2):
 - (i) the District Council district in which the development is located;
 - (ii) the street number;
 - (iii) the date on which the occupation permit was granted;
 - (iv) the date on which the certificate of compliance (commonly known as "letters of satisfaction") was granted;
 - (v) the sum of the prices of the unsold units concerned on the price list; and
 - (vi) the sum of the rateable values of the unsold units concerned;
- (4) among the aforesaid 9 000 unsold units, whether there are units in respect of which the beneficial interests have been conveyed or transferred upon completion and the instruments concerned have been granted stamp duty reliefs by the Collector of Stamp Revenue under section 45 of the Stamp Duty Ordinance; if so, of the number of such units; if not, the reasons for that;
- (5) under the existing requirement, when the transferee of a conveyance or transfer mentioned in (4) sells the unit concerned subsequently to a third person who is not his or her associate, whether the former is required to make retrospective payment in respect of the stamp duty relief granted by the Collector of Stamp Revenue under section 45 of the Stamp Duty Ordinance; if so, of the number of such cases in each of the past three years and the amount of stamp duty involved in each case;
- (6) of the number of instruments involving conveyance or transfer of beneficial interests of private domestic units which were granted stamp duty reliefs under section 45 of the Stamp Duty Ordinance in each of the past three years and, in respect of each instrument, the date of conveyance or transfer and the amount of stamp duty involved (set out in a table); and
- (7) given that if the association between two body corporates ceases within two years after the date of execution of the instrument, the Collector of Stamp Revenue shall have the right to withdraw the stamp duty relief that has already been granted under section 45 of the Stamp Duty Ordinance, of the number of cases in which the Collector of Stamp Revenue withdrew the stamp duty reliefs in each of the past three years, and the amount of stamp duty involved in each case (set out in a table); whether the authorities have reviewed the implementation of the relief requirement; if not, of the reasons for that; if so, the details, including whether such requirement will be

amended?

Reply:

President,

After consulting the Inland Revenue Department (IRD), my reply to various parts of the question raised by the Hon Dennis Kwok is as follows:

(1), (2) and (3) The Government releases statistics on private housing supply in the primary market on the website of the Transport and Housing Bureau (THB) on a quarterly basis, including the number of unsold units in completed projects. The concerned statistics are consolidated by THB based on inputs provided by various Government departments (e.g. Buildings Department, Land Registry, etc.) for the purposes of projecting the supply of first-hand private residential units in the coming three to four years.

As at March 31, 2018, there were around 9 000 unsold first-hand private residential units in completed projects. These unsold units may be vacant units, units occupied by the developers for self-use or units rented out by developers (e.g. serviced apartments). As developers are not required to declare the occupancy of these unsold units, we do not have information about the number of units rented out by developers among these 9 000 units. We also do not compile statistical data on the size, the District Council district in which the relevant development is located, the street number, the dates on which the occupation permit and certificate of compliance were granted, the prices and the rateable values of these unsold units.

(4) The above 9 000 unsold units refer to the number of unsold first-hand private residential units in completed projects. In other words, if the units have been transferred to other persons or companies through agreement for sale and purchase, these units would not be counted as unsold units.

(5) According to the Stamp Duty Ordinance, if a transferee of an instrument executed by associated bodies corporate in relation to sale and purchase or transfer of residential property sells or transfers the residential property covered by the instrument to an unassociated third party in future, the transferee is not required to pay to the Collector of Stamp Revenue the stamp duty in respect of the instrument for which relief has been granted. However, unless the transaction for sale or transfer of residential property to an unassociated third party fulfills the exemption conditions prescribed in the Stamp Duty Ordinance, the relevant transaction will be subject to Special Stamp Duty, Buyer's Stamp Duty and the New Residential Stamp Duty with reference to applicable rates.

(6) In the past three financial years, the number of residential property cases and the amount of stamp duty involved therein where stamp duty relief was granted by the IRD on grounds of property transfer between associated bodies corporate under sections 29H(3) and 45 of the Stamp Duty Ordinance are set out in the table below:

Financial year	Number of cases (Note 1)	Amount of stamp duty involved (Note 2) (\$ Million)
2015-16	206	2,626
2016-17	168	1,874
2017-18	253	3,014

Note 1: The numbers of cases listed in the table above are classified by the date on which IRD granted the relief. IRD has not performed analysis on the date of conveyance of and the amount of stamp duty involved in each individual case.

Note 2: It only includes the amount of relieved ad valorem stamp duty and Buyer's Stamp Duty. Since it is not necessary to provide the date of acquiring the relevant residential property at the time of applying for the relief, the amount of relieved Special Stamp Duty cannot be computed.

(7) According to section 45(5A) of the Stamp Duty Ordinance, if associated bodies corporate no longer qualify for the associated relationship as defined under section 45(2) within two years from the date of executing the instrument for sale and purchase or transfer of property, the relevant bodies corporate have to pay the stamp duty for which relief has been granted. In the past three financial years, IRD had no record of withdrawing stamp duty relief by reason of cessation of associated relationship.

Section 45 of the Stamp Duty Ordinance can effectively cater for the genuine need of transferring properties between associated bodies corporate, and at the same time empower the Collector of Stamp Revenue to refuse granting relief and recover stamp duty under appropriate circumstances for the protection of Government revenue. Since the relevant provision has all along been effective and there are no signs of abuse, the Government currently has no plan to amend the relevant provision.

Special traffic arrangements for race meeting in Sha Tin

Police advise motorists that special traffic arrangements will be implemented in Sha Tin to facilitate the race meeting today (May 30).

The arrangements will come into effect two hours before the start of the first race and will last until the crowds have dispersed after the race meeting.

Appropriate traffic signs will be put up and police will be on hand to

guide motorists.

The Police also appeal to people going to Sha Tin Racecourse for the race meeting and to Happy Valley Racecourse for cross betting to make maximum use of public transport.

Parking spaces at the two racecourses are available only to holders of appropriate permits issued by Hong Kong Jockey Club and any vehicles illegally parked will be towed away.

LCQ2: Primary 3 Territory-wide System Assessment

Following is a question by the Hon Ip Kin-yuen and a reply by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (May 30):

Question:

The Education Bureau (EDB) has decided to resume the Primary 3 Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) from this year. Each year, the EDB will sample 10 per cent of the Primary 3 students from each public sector and Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) primary school to participate in TSA, which is administered by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA). Meanwhile, schools may apply to the HKEAA on their own for participation in TSA by all the Primary 3 students in their schools, and may request for their TSA school reports from the HKEAA under such circumstances. It has been reported that, as at April 30, about 230 primary schools in Hong Kong, including 30 government primary schools, opted for all the Primary 3 students in their schools to participate in TSA this year. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of schools to date that have applied for participation in TSA by all the Primary 3 students in their schools this year and the total number of students involved, together with a breakdown by school type (i.e. aided, DSS, government and private primary schools);

(2) as the EDB has indicated that it will, upon resumption of TSA, continue to monitor whether there is any recurrence of the situation of schools drilling their students for participating in the assessment, whether the EDB has formulated a specific monitoring mechanism for this purpose and monitor the situation directly through major stakeholders such as teachers and parents; if so, of the details and the implementation timetable; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) of the type of follow-up measures to be adopted by the authorities for addressing situations such as schools drilling students or disrupting their normal learning in order to cope with TSA, or attracting enrolment by students through boasting about their TSA results?

Reply:

President,

In March 2018, the Education Bureau (EDB) accepted the report and recommendations of the Coordinating Committee on Basic Competency Assessment and Assessment Literacy (the Committee), including the new arrangements for Primary 3 Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) in 2018 and beyond. Under the new arrangements, the arrangements for the territory-wide and school levels of Primary 3 TSA will be handled separately.

At the territory-wide level, the Government will sample about 10 per cent of students from each public sector and Direct Subsidy Scheme school to participate in the annual Primary 3 TSA. In addition, to understand the overall learning performance of non-Chinese speaking students and students with special educational needs so as to provide appropriate support, a certain number of students from these two student groups have to be separately sampled to meet the statistical requirements. Students' assessment results will only be counted as territory-wide data. Since only a small number of students in each school will participate in the assessment and the situation of individual schools cannot be reflected, school reports will not be provided.

Schools which would like to obtain school-level reports to improve learning and teaching may directly approach the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) to arrange participation of all of their Primary 3 students. In addition, in the light of school-based and subject-based needs, schools may choose to obtain different assessment information, including four different types of reports, reports on overall performance of students with special educational needs and/or non-Chinese speaking students, and school reports for the questionnaire survey on learning attitude and motivation. The HKEAA will put reports of their choice into the online system for schools' direct downloading. The EDB will not obtain school reports of individual schools from the HKEAA.

In fact, as part of the review process in the previous two years, some schools indicated their requests on the continuous use of assessment information to improve learning and teaching, while, at the same time, some members of the community showed their distrust of the previous arrangements for TSA. The new arrangements recommended by the Committee manage to balance the views of both sides, and aim to further strengthen the confidence of the education sector and the community in TSA and rebuild mutual trust, ultimately achieving TSA's objective of promoting assessment for learning to benefit the students. The audio-visual assessment for Chinese and the speaking assessment parts for Chinese and English of Primary 3 TSA in 2018 were conducted on May 2 and 3, and the written assessment parts for Chinese, English and Mathematics will be conducted in mid-June. It has progressed

smoothly so far. The EDB will continue to closely monitor related operational arrangements.

Our reply to the Hon Ip Kin-yuen's question is as follows:

(1) Under the new arrangements, schools which would like all their Primary 3 students to participate in TSA and obtain detailed school reports may approach the HKEAA directly for arrangements. The EDB has publicly pledged not to enquire about the participation of individual schools or obtain school reports of individual schools from the HKEAA. Therefore, the EDB does not have information on the participation of individual schools, including school names, types, number of students and respective school sponsoring bodies. The EDB will also not enquire about relevant information from the HKEAA so as to avoid misunderstanding. According to the information released by the HKEAA to the public, by end of April 2018, about 230 primary schools opted for full cohort participation in Primary 3 TSA.

(2) and (3) The new arrangements and the enhancement measures have greatly reduced the incentives for drilling, and drilling problem before the 2016 Tryout Study (Primary 3) and 2017 Basic Competency Assessment Research Study was not observed, while the EDB will closely monitor the situation. In the previous two years, the EDB adopted questionnaire surveys to collect and gauge views of more than 23 000 parents of students participating in Primary 3 TSA, and more than 50 focus group meetings for teachers were conducted to understand how schools take forward and implement the arrangements for Primary 3 TSA, including whether there were additional exercises for TSA. The EDB will continue to collect and gauge views of parents and teachers of students participating in Primary 3 TSA through questionnaire surveys and focus group meetings.

In addition, the EDB will keep in view the implementation of school-based assessment through various channels, including inspections, school visits and daily contact. It is worth noting that Primary 3 TSA is an assessment on Basic Competencies which form part of the curriculum, and are the core requirements of the curriculum that students are expected to acquire upon completion of the learning stage. We should not simply categorise the exercises that schools or teachers give to students for consolidating their Basic Competencies as drilling for the purpose of Primary 3 TSA or simply equate Primary 3 TSA with drilling.

According to the prevailing practice, when downloading school reports from the website of the HKEAA, schools must follow the "Protocol of School Level Data of the TSA" and undertake not to publicise the school level data, or part of the data in isolation, through any channels (such as school's publication, school's website and other publicity materials) to anybody outside school. The HKEAA will seriously follow up with schools for any violations.

In fact, the community's extensive discussion and concern about TSA issues have significantly enhanced the transparency about schools' taking forward and implementation of the new arrangements for Primary 3 TSA. The EDB will closely monitor the implementation of the new arrangements and maintain

communication with schools and related stakeholders to explore room for continued enhancement and follow-up arrangements. If related complaints are received, the Bureau will investigate and take follow-up actions.

Thank you, President.