



香港糖尿病聯會 Diabetes Hongkong

香港德輔道中 244-252 號東協商業大廈 18 樓 1802 室
Unit 1802, 18/F., Tung Hip Commercial Building, 244-252 Des Voeux Road Central, Hong Kong.
電話 Tel : (852) 2723 2087 傳真 Fax : (852) 2723 2207 電郵 Email : info@diabetes-hk.org

Response to the “Your Health, Your Life” Healthcare Reform Consultation June 2008

Although Hong Kong’s healthcare services have been functioning well to protect public health all these years, an alarming prevalence of some chronic diseases is projected to occur because of population ageing, unhealthy diet, obesity and a sedentary lifestyle. A good example of these diseases is diabetes which is now a worldwide epidemic affecting people of all ages. In Hong Kong, it is estimated that there are about 700,000 diabetics, affecting 10% of the total population and 5-7% of the working population. It is particularly common to the elderly, as 20-30% of people aged 65 and above are suffering from the disease. In line with the global situation, there is a surging trend of diabetes. By 2025, it is estimated that 12.8% of the Hong Kong population, representing more than 1 million people will suffer from the disease. Whilst we support the need to review the existing healthcare system, we urge the Government to pay much attention to this rising trend of chronic diseases (e.g. diabetes) during the reform of the system. Particularly, we strongly hope that the Government will remain the primary financing source for our healthcare system and to commit the proposed increase in the recurrent government expenditure for medical and health services to at least 17% of overall recurrent government expenditure by 2011-12.

By proposing to reform the existing system to ensure that every member of our community can continue to enjoy quality healthcare services and protection, the Government is further reinforcing the principle that “no one should be denied adequate healthcare through lack of means”. This is to be welcomed. We urge that quality, accessible and affordable healthcare services should continue to be available to all, particularly (a) the poor, aged and patients with chronic illness; and (b) patients with illness and conditions which are life-threatening or with emergency.

Furthermore, we are concerned whether the proposed 3-5% of contribution will be sufficient for the healthcare cost of a chronic patient. How can we assure that chronic patients will be able to bear the residual amount of cost which is not covered by health insurance or the medical savings ? Or do they need to go back to healthcare safety net? If so, to what extent can such level of contribution alleviate the existing burden of public healthcare? We strongly urge that the healthcare safety net should always cover those struck by serious illness requiring costly treatment, so that chronic patients will not need to shoulder a heavy financial burden or to face declining level and quality of healthcare.



香港糖尿病聯會 Diabetes Hongkong

香港德輔道中 244-252 號東協商業大廈 18 樓 1802 室

Unit 1802, 18/F., Tung Hip Commercial Building, 244-252 Des Voeux Road Central, Hong Kong.

電話 Tel : (852) 2723 2087

傳真 Fax : (852) 2723 2207

電郵 Email : info@diabetes-hk.org

In view of the likely expansion of the private healthcare market, we suggest setting standards and quality assurance of healthcare, so that there will be a benchmark to be followed in both the public and private sectors. It is essential to have a benchmark (i.e. a commonly agreed measurement) to ensure that patients are given the expected standard of services, regardless of whether they choose public or private healthcare services.

Diabetes is costly in both human and economic terms. Direct costs to patients with diabetes and their families may be a heavy burden as the individual or family has to pay for insulin, medical care, drugs and other supplies (e.g. glucose meter, test strips, lancets and insulin pump) out of their own pocket. We suggest that under the new system, these medical expenses should be fully or partially reimbursable by the patients through an independent non-profit-making organization which has experience and expertise in diabetes care and management.

Regarding various supplementary financing options, we are against the “Out-of-Pocket Payments” Scheme since those who need to use healthcare (especially the chronic patients and elderly) will be adversely affected by the substantial increase in medical fees. Also, we do not support the “Voluntary Health Insurance” Scheme under which the high-risk groups (e.g. chronic patients, the elderly and others with pre-existing medical conditions) will suffer from adverse selection and harsh conditions imposed by private health insurers. In fact, the Government must strengthen the existing regulation and monitoring of the insurance industry so as to better protect the consumers’ right, even this option is not adopted.

The current public health system is extremely cost effective. We are witnessing remarkable results using a modest 2.8% of GDP, and miraculously, there is practically zero increase in this proportion from 98/99 to 04/05. In view of this, we believe there is enormous room for Hong Kong, a wealthy society, to achieve a better balance in wealth distribution by adopting the social health insurance.

Diabetes Hongkong (DHK) was founded in September 1996. As a charitable organization, our mission is to serve all people with diabetes and their families, to promote social awareness and concern towards diabetes, and to strive for optimal care and prevention of the disease. Additional information is available at www.diabetes-hk.org.