

**Replies to supplementary questions raised by Finance Committee Members
in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08**

**Director of Bureau : Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food
Session No. : 16**

| Reply Serial No. | Question Serial No. | Name of Member | Head | Programme |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|--------------------------------|
| <u>S-HWFB(H)01</u> | S049 | LAM Wai-keung, Daniel | 140 | Health |
| <u>S-HWFB(H)02</u> | S073 | WONG Kwok-hing | 140 | Subvention: Hospital Authority |
| <u>S-HWFB(H)03</u> | S074 | WONG Kwok-hing | 140 | Subvention: Hospital Authority |
| <u>S-HWFB(H)04</u> | S075 | WONG Kwok-hing | 140 | Subvention: Hospital Authority |
| <u>S-HWFB(H)05</u> | S076 | WONG Kwok-hing | 140 | Subvention: Hospital Authority |
| <u>S-HWFB(H)06</u> | S077 | WONG Kwok-hing | 140 | Subvention: Hospital Authority |
| <u>S-HWFB(H)07</u> | SV018 | LEUNG Kwok-hung | 140 | Subvention: Hospital Authority |
| <u>S-HWFB(H)08</u> | SV019 | CHAN Yuen-han | 140 | Subvention: Hospital Authority |

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

S-HWFB(H)01

Question Serial No.

S049

Head: 140 Government Secretariat: Health, Welfare and Food Bureau (Health and Welfare Branch) Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (2) Health

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Health and Welfare)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food

Question:

With considerable improvement in Government's fiscal position and in light of the medical service need of the residents in islands district, will the Government consider the early construction of a hospital in Tung Chung and strengthening the medical service in islands such as Peng Chau, Lamma Island and Cheung Chau. If yes, what is the amount of expenditure involved? If not, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Hon. LAM Wai-keung, Daniel

Reply:

Planning work for the North Lantau Hospital is underway. The hospital is expected to be commissioned by phases such that services may be provided as early as possible.

While hospital and specialist outpatient services will continue to be provided outside the Islands District, general outpatient service in the District has been enhanced through the introduction of family medicine services and enhanced care for patients with chronic illness.

Signature _____

Name in block letters _____ Ms Sandra LEE

Post Title _____ Permanent Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Health and Welfare)

Date _____ 23.3.2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

S-HWFB(H)02

Question Serial No.

S073

Head: 140 Government Secretariat: Subhead (No. & title):
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau (Health
and Welfare Branch)

Programme: (6) Subvention: Hospital Authority

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Health and Welfare)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food

Question:

Would the Administration consider further reducing the charges for Government outpatient service so as to help relieve the non-CSSA elderly recipients of the burden of medical expenses and lowering the age line for the elderly to 50? If yes, what is the expenditure involved? If not, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Hon. WONG Kwok-hing

Reply:

The Hospital Authority has no plan to reduce the charges for its outpatient services. Patients with financial difficulties, including non-Comprehensive Social Security Assistance elderly, may apply for medical fee waivers.

In order to make medical fee waivers more accessible to elderly patients, we have already implemented a number of improvement measures over the past few years, including setting a higher asset limit for elderly applicants at \$150,000 as compared with \$30,000 for other persons; giving medical social workers the discretion to take into account the specific needs of the elderly when assessing their waiver applications; extending the maximum validity period of period waivers from six months to 12 months for elderly patients who require frequent use of medical services; and extending the coverage of period waivers to prescheduled follow-up appointments at general outpatient clinics.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Ms Sandra LEE

Post Title Permanent Secretary for Health, Welfare
and Food (Health and Welfare)

Date 23.3.2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

S-HWFB(H)03

Question Serial No.

S074

Head: 140 Government Secretariat: Health, Subhead (No. & title):
Welfare and Food Bureau (Health and
Welfare Branch)

Programme: (6) Subvention: Hospital Authority

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Health and Welfare)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food

Question:

Regarding reply serial no. HWFB(H)137 about the general out-patient service in Tung Chung, as it will take quite some time before the Tung Chung Hospital can commence operation, in the meantime will the Hospital Authority carry out the following improvement measures:

- (1) provide better evening out-patient service;
- (2) provide 24-hour emergency medical services;
- (3) provide common specialist services such as dental, gynaecology and Chinese medicine services; and
- (4) if so, please also provide the expenditures required for carrying out the above measures

Asked by: Hon. WONG Kwok-hing

Reply:

(1) The Tung Chung General Out-patient Clinic (TCGOPC) currently provides both daytime and evening general out-patient services (Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.; and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.). The utilization of evening clinic in TCGOPC is lower than utilization of daytime clinic and the opening hours of the evening clinic are on par with most GOPCs with evening clinics in other districts. We thus do not see a need for increasing the provision of outpatient services in the evening clinic or extending the opening hours of the evening clinic at this juncture. Meanwhile, on-going improvements are being made to the overall general out-patient services in Tung Chung, such as introducing family medicine services and enhancing the care for patients with chronic illnesses. These improvements are part and parcel of the clinic operation and the expenditure for such is not itemized. The Hospital Authority (HA) will continue to monitor the healthcare needs of the Tung Chung community.

(2)/(3) It is inefficient to provide stand-alone 24-hour Accident and Emergency Services as well as other specialist services such as gynaecology services in Tung Chung where the demand for such services is low. The majority of the general dental services are provided by the private sector, and there are at least 6 private dentists who provide affordable services to Tung Chung residents. Likewise, there are over 10 private Chinese medicine practitioners offering service at Tung Chung at affordable prices. There is no plan to establish these health care services in Tung Chung for the time being.

Signature _____

Name in block letters _____ Ms Sandra LEE

Post Title _____ Permanent Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food
(Health and Welfare)

Date _____ 23.3.2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

S-HWFB(H)04

Question Serial No.

S075

Head: 140 Government Secretariat: Health, Subhead (No. & title):
Welfare and Food Bureau (Health and
Welfare Branch)

Programme: (6) Subvention: Hospital Authority

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Health and Welfare)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food

Question:

Further to the question on the allocation of consultation chips for government out-patient clinics, will the Administration thoroughly re-consider and analyse the views of the users, with a view to further reviewing and improving the booking system at out-patient clinics in public hospitals? If no, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Hon. WONG Kwok-hing

Reply:

The Hospital Authority (HA) has and will continue to monitor the operations of the telephone booking service in general out-patient clinics (GOPCs), and to regularly review with a view to improving the service taking into account the views of the local community and clinic users. In fact, having regard to the feedback expressed by local community leaders and individual users, HA has been continuously taking a series of measures to improve the telephone book service, as set out in our reply serial number HWFB(H)164. For instance, for patients with special needs or genuine difficult in using the telephone booking service, help desks have been set up in clinics and staff designated to render appropriate assistance to these patients. HA is also in the process of remaking the interactive voice responses with authentic human voice, improving its pace and tone to make it more user-friendly, repeating the appointment information for patients to grasp more easily, and streamlining the flow of booking by reducing the number of steps required. HA is also considering trials in selected clinics of a number of measures to facilitate the access to general out-patient service by patients especially the elderly, including dedicated booking hotline for the elderly, reserved telephone booking quota for the elders, and allowing booking of time slot in the following 24 hours instead of the current 3 p.m. cut-off time.

Signature _____

Name in block letters _____ Ms Sandra LEE

Post Title _____ Permanent Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food
(Health and Welfare)

Date _____ 23.3.2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

S-HWFB(H)05

Question Serial No.

S076

Head: 140 Government Secretariat: Health, Subhead (No. & title):
Welfare and Food Bureau (Health and
Welfare Branch)

Programme: (6) Subvention: Hospital Authority

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Health and Welfare)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food

Question:

Further to the question on the allocation of consultation chips for government out-patient clinics, will the Administration consider increasing the manpower in answering telephone calls manually, with a view to complementing and improving the touch-tone telephone booking service? If yes, what are the manpower and expenditure involved? If no, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Hon. WONG Kwok-hing

Reply:

The Hospital Authority (HA) has introduced the telephone booking system in response to public demands for improving the crowded queuing and waiting conditions in its general out-patient clinics (GOPCs). Since its implementation, HA has considered various suggestions of improving the telephone booking service. In this regard, the suggestion of switching to or adding a manually-operated telephone booking service to replace or supplement the existing computer-based interactive voice booking system has also been carefully considered but is considered not feasible because:

- (i) given the huge volume of out-patient attendance, it is necessary for GOPCs to automate and computerise their various operations to ensure efficient use of resources;
- (ii) at present there are some 500 telephone lines serving about 62 GOPCs. A manually-operated telephone booking service would have significant resources and manpower implications for the GOPCs and undermine their ability to maintain the level of out-patient services;
- (iii) operating a manually-operated telephone booking service would require substantial changes to the existing booking system creating major technical difficulties; and
- (iv) in practice, a manually-operated telephone booking service is likely to lengthen the time required for each telephone booking and make it even more difficult for users to be put through.

Meanwhile, HA has implemented a number of other measures with a view to complementing and improving the telephone booking service in GOPCs, as detailed in our reply serial number HWFB(H)164. HA will continue to monitor the operation of the telephone booking service and regularly review with a view to improving the booking service.

Signature _____

Name in block letters _____ Ms Sandra LEE

Post Title _____ Permanent Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food
(Health and Welfare)

Date _____ 23.3.2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

S-HWFB(H)06

Question Serial No.

S077

Head: 140 Government Secretariat: Health, Subhead (No. & title):
Welfare and Food Bureau (Health and
Welfare Branch)

Programme: (6) Subvention: Hospital Authority

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Health and Welfare)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food

Question:

Further to the question on the allocation of consultation chips for government out-patient clinics, will the Administration consider taking different measures to improve out-patient services, such as providing queuing quota and increasing the quota for senior citizens? If no, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Hon. WONG Kwok-hing

Reply:

The Hospital Authority (HA) has implemented the telephone booking service in its general out-patient clinics (GOPCs) in response to public demands for improving the crowded queuing and waiting conditions in GOPCs. The result achieved is noticeable – the crowded waiting condition at GOPCs has significantly improved and patients no longer need to line up outside GOPCs early in the morning. Setting aside quota for queuing would re-introduce queues at GOPCs and defeat the purpose of introducing the telephone booking service.

At present, consultation quotas for GOPCs are open for booking by all members of the public including the elderly. Utilization statistics so far do not indicate any significant change in utilization of GOPC services by different age groups. In particular, there has not been any noticeable drop in utilization by the elderly after introduction of telephone booking service. HA is considering to conduct trials in selected clinics of a number of measures to facilitate the access to general out-patient service by patients especially the elderly, including dedicated booking hotline for the elderly, reserved telephone booking quota for the elders, and allowing booking of time slot in the following 24 hours instead of the current 3 p.m. cut-off time. HA will continue to monitor the utilization of GOPC services and the operation of the telephone booking service to see if further improvements would be needed.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Ms Sandra LEE

Post Title Permanent Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food
(Health and Welfare)

Date 23.3.2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

S-HWFB(H)07

Question Serial No.

SV018

Head: 140 Government Secretariat: Health, Subhead (No. & title):
Welfare and Food Bureau (Health and
Welfare Branch)

Programme: (6) Subvention: Hospital Authority

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Health and Welfare)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food

Question:

At the request of Hon. LEUNG Kwok-hung, the Administration agreed to provide the number of patients residing in the New Territories West who sought medical attention in a clinic or hospital of the Hospital Authority (HA) in other districts.

Asked by: Hon. LEUNG Kwok-hung

Reply:

The number of patients residing in the New Territories West (NTW) Cluster who sought medical attention in the general outpatient clinics (GOPCs), specialist outpatient clinics (SOPCs) and hospitals of the Hospital Authority (HA) in districts outside the NTW Cluster for 2005-06 is set out in the table below. It should be noted that one patient can use more than one type of HA's service (both inside and outside his resident cluster) during a year.

| Service | Total consumption of HA services in all districts by patients resided in NTW cluster (a) | Consumption in hospitals/clinics in own cluster (b) | Consumption in hospitals/clinics in other clusters (c) = (a) – (b) | % of consumption in hospitals/clinics in other clusters (c)/(a) |
|---|---|--|---|--|
| Inpatient and Day patient (Number of patient days) | 999,518 | 808,293 | 191,225 | 19% |
| Specialist Outpatient (Number of attendances) | 786,268 | 633,163 | 153,105 | 19% |

| Service | Total consumption of HA services in all districts by patients resided in NTW cluster (a) | Consumption in hospitals/clinics in own cluster (b) | Consumption in hospitals/clinics in other clusters (c) = (a) – (b) | % of consumption in hospitals/clinics in other clusters (c)/(a) |
|--|---|--|---|--|
| General Outpatient (Number of attendances)* | 816,734 | 762,185 | 54,549 | 7% |

* GOPC attendance captured in the computer system covers about 97 % of the total attendance in 2005/06.

Signature _____

Name in block letters _____ Ms Sandra LEE

Post Title _____ Permanent Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Health and Welfare)

Date _____ 23.3.2007

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2007-08

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

S-HWFB(H)08

Question Serial No.

SV019

Head: 140 Government Secretariat: Subhead (No. & title):
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau (Health
and Welfare Branch)

Programme: (6) Subvention: Hospital Authority

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Health and Welfare)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food

Question:

At the request of Hon. CHAN Yuen-han, the Administration agreed to provide details of complaint cases involving mentally ill patients being turned away for treatment at HA hospitals, including the number and nature of the complaints, and how the cases were resolved.

Asked by: Hon. CHAN Yuen-han

Reply:

According to the Hospital Authority's records, there are no complaint cases involving mentally ill patients being turned away for treatment at public hospitals.

Signature _____

Name in block letters _____ Ms Sandra LEE

Post Title _____ Permanent Secretary for Health, Welfare
and Food (Health and Welfare)

Date _____ 23.3.2007