

In response to "Healthcare Reform Consultation Document", The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Hong Kong has the following recommendations:

1. Promoting Preventive Health

Community Pharmacists are a major form of healthcare resource. No other health professionals are so readily available and accessible in the community to help the citizens at large. At present, this kind of resource is underutilized. Pharmacists are in a good position to play an invaluable role in disease prevention through promotion of a healthy lifestyle; for example, conducting smoking cessation campaigns, and introducing blood pressure monitoring.

2. Addressing Primary Healthcare

Community Pharmacists are an untapped resource to facilitate delivery of an effective primary healthcare system. By providing free-of-charge medication review and patient counseling, they are able to minimize patients' medication-related problems and improve therapeutic outcomes. Also, patients having minor ailments can, instead of going to the already overburdened public hospital system, consult pharmacists in their communities for advice and treatment, if necessary, by appropriate over-the-counter medicines.

3. Visiting Old Age Homes

In addition, we recommend every Old Age Home should employ a pharmacist such as Visiting Pharmacist Officer to sort out the complex medication regimens (medication reconciliation) and to maintain updated drug records for elderly residents. Pharmacists should be the professional-in-charge of the drug distribution system in Old Age Homes, with the overall objective of ensuring medication safety and optimal patient care. Standard procedures for drug prescribing, dispensing and administration in Old Age Homes should be clearly defined, established and implemented.

4. Extending the Idea of "Money Follows Patient" to Drug Costs

One of the main reasons why many patients choose the public sector is because they can rely on the public system to provide them with almost free supply of drugs to meet their on-going needs of their chronic illness. Therefore, if the Government intends to introduce any form of subsidy for healthcare services with the aim to give patients more mobility between public and

private sectors, such subsidies must cover the cost of drugs in order to have any realistic chance of success. In this way, patients do not need to return to the public system for the medical consultation – they can go to the private sector too if and only if their financial burden on medication costs are catered in the same way as provided by the existing public sector. Hence, the public sector would not be overburdened with the growing number of patients for almost free drug supply.

5. Providing More Information

Patient's choice is an important element in promoting responsible self-care. To empower patients in selecting suitable healthcare services, more disclosure on the qualification of doctors and treatment fees and charges should be encouraged. In particular, drug charges should be distinctly itemized in all medical consultation.

In Conclusion,

We think the Reform is necessary but it is not just about the financial side of the health care system, we need to review the health service structure, look at the possible service providers including doctors, pharmacists, nurses, allied health in both public and private sectors and what are the mechanisms to be put in place to monitor, support the on-going performance of these service providers in order that the public can believe that the Government has true intentions to improve the health system.

Contact Person: Mr. So Yiu Wah, President
Address: The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Hong Kong
13/F, Kingsfield Centre, 18 Shell Street, North Point, Hong
Kong
Telephone: 2855 5787
Website: <http://www.shphk.org.hk>