

Existing and planned measures on the promotion of equality for ethnic minorities

Medical and Health

It is the Government's policy to promote and protect the health of our community and the public healthcare services are available to all members of the public regardless of their race and ethnic origins. Specific measures have been put in place to facilitate ethnic minorities to access to the public healthcare services.

Services Concerned The public healthcare services in Hong Kong cover a range of services from health promotion, disease prevention, to primary, secondary and tertiary care. The services to patients are mainly provided by the Hospital Authority (HA), which is a statutory body established under the Hospital Authority Ordinance (Cap.113) to manage all public hospitals in Hong Kong. HA is providing medical treatment and rehabilitation services to the public through hospitals, general outpatient clinics, specialist outpatient clinics and outreaching services. Meanwhile, the Department of Health (DH) is the Government's health adviser and agency to execute health policies and statutory functions. It is providing a range of services on health promotion, disease prevention, cure and rehabilitation.

Existing Measures Interpretation services at public hospitals/clinics:

- Interpretation services are now available in public hospitals/clinics under the management of HA through a service contractor, part-time court interpreters, volunteers and consulate offices. The interpretation service provided by the service contractor covers 12 languages (including Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi, Nepali, Bahasa Indonesia, Vietnamese, Thai, Korean, Bengali, Japanese, Tagalog and German). The service is provided on the site or through telephone depending on the needs in each case.

- For scheduled service (such as medical appointment at the specialist and general outpatient clinics of the HA and services of DH), patients may request the hospital/clinic/health centre concerned to arrange interpretation service in advance. For non-scheduled service (such as hospital admission during emergency), hospital staff will arrange for the provision of interpretation service where necessary or upon request of patients.
- To enhance the standard of interpretation services provided at public hospitals/clinics, HA has arranged to provide training to the interpreters of its service contractor to equip them with general knowledge on hospital operation, medical terminologies and infection control.

Other measures to facilitate communication:

- To facilitate communication with the ethnic minorities in public hospitals/clinics, HA has provided its frontline staff with response cue cards, patient information sheets and consent forms, etc in a number of ethnic minority languages to enhance the communication between the clinical staff and patients, to facilitate the registration and provision of services. These documents contain information of some common illnesses (e.g. headache, chest pain and fever, etc), treatment procedures (e.g. blood transfusion, radiation safety, etc) and details of HA's service (e.g. fees and charges, triage category in the Accident and Emergency Department). HA has currently produced cue cards, patient information sheets and consent forms in 18 languages, including Urdu, Punjabi, Bengali, Russian, Arabic, Nepalese, Vietnamese, Indonesian, Malaysian, Thai, Philippines, Japanese, Hindi, Korean, German, Portuguese, Spanish and French.
- HA also provides suitable training to staff to facilitate their communication with patients of ethnic minorities. HA has organized training sessions in different hospital clusters to improve staff's communication skills with the ethnic

minorities, as well as their knowledge on cultural sensitivity issues of the ethnic minorities and on the proper procedures in arranging interpretation service. Frontline staff, such as staff at the Enquiry Offices, clerks and nurses in hospitals and clinics, have attended the training sessions.

- The health education information produced by DH to the public is generally in both Chinese and English. Information in other languages, including some minority languages such as Hindi, Nepalese, Pakistani, Indonesian, etc, is also provided for a number of selected health topics and DH's services, such as childcare and parenting, home safety, prevention of Human Swine Influenza, HIV antibody test, etc.

Assessment of Future Work and Existing Measures ● There were around 1188 cases where interpretation services were provided in public hospitals/clinics during the period from April to December 2009. The feedback from service users indicates that the services are satisfactory. HA will continue to monitor the utilization and users' feedback on the interpretation services.

Additional Measures Taken / To Be Taken ● Starting from June 2009, HA has expanded the scope of interpretation service of its contractor to increase the number of ethnic minorities languages covered from four to twelve. HA and DH will continue their efforts to facilitate the access of ethnic minorities to public healthcare services and will enhance the supporting measures for the ethnic minorities as necessary.

**Food and Health Bureau
Department of Health
Hospital Authority
April 2010**