



HONG KONG : THE FACTS



Department of Health

The Department of Health was established in 1989 upon the re-organization of the Medical and Health Department. The Department operates with a budget of \$6.47 billion (2015/16) and a workforce of about 5 900 civil servants comprising 76 grades and 149 ranks in October 2015. The annual client attendance was about 6.5 million in 2014.

MISSION

The Department of Health is the HKSAR Government's health adviser and agency to execute health policies and statutory functions. It safeguards the health of the people of Hong Kong through promotive, preventive, curative and rehabilitative services as well as fostering community partnership and international collaboration. There are four core roles, namely, regulatory, advisory, health advocacy and promotion, and disease prevention and control.

REGULATORY ROLE

Port Health Office: The Port Health Office enforces the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance and observes the International Health Regulations in order to prevent the spread of communicable and other serious diseases into and out of Hong Kong via air, land or sea. The Office conducts a series of measures at various boundary control points, including health screening service, health education against communicable diseases, regular inspection of sanitation, as well as responding to public health emergencies. It also provides travel health service at the Travel Health Centres. In addition, it offers medical advice to vessels and ensures that vessels comply with the legal requirement on public health for entering Hong Kong.

Drug Office: The Drug Office ensures the safety, quality and efficacy of medicines used in Hong Kong. Acting on the authority of the Pharmacy and Poisons Board, the Drug Office registers and approves the marketing of pharmaceutical products, issues license to drug manufacturers, importers and wholesalers, and retailers.

Radiation Health Unit: The Radiation Health Unit is the Government's adviser on radiation safety and protection. It advises the Government on the protection of public health in nuclear incidents, management of radioactive materials and radioactive wastes, and the health effects of radiation fields. It serves as the executive arm of the Radiation Board to control the import, export, possession and use of radioactive substances and irradiating apparatus and safeguard occupational and public health through licensing control and inspection. It also provides radiation monitoring and health surveillance services for occupationally exposed persons and precision calibration of reference instruments which are used as metrological standards in radiation protection.

Professional and healthcare institutions registration:

Licensing of private hospitals and other healthcare institutions is undertaken by the Department of Health. The Department also provides secretariat support for the registration and professional regulation of healthcare personnel, namely, medical practitioners, dentists, nurses, midwives, pharmacists, occupational therapists, radiographers, optometrists, physiotherapists, medical laboratory technologists, chiropractors, dental hygienists and Chinese medicine practitioners.

Chinese Medicine Division: Professional and administrative support is provided to the Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong on devising and implementing regulatory measures for Chinese medicine practice and Chinese medicines. The Chinese Medicine Division is also responsible for developing the Hong Kong Chinese Materia Medica Standards. Since April 2012, the Chinese Medicine Division has been designated by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as the Collaborating Centre for Traditional Medicine, with a role in assisting the WHO to formulate policies and strategies as well as setting regulatory standards for traditional medicine.

ADVISORY ROLE

The Department of Health has been providing health advice in support of the formulation of health policy and the work of other government bureaux and departments. The Department seeks to expand her advisory role to support sectors outside the Administration and the health sector.

ROLE OF DISEASE PREVENTION AND CONTROL

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP), established within the Department of Health on June 1, 2004, is vested with the responsibility and authority for the prevention and the control of communicable and non-communicable diseases. It is supported by six functional branches.

Surveillance and Epidemiology Branch: The Surveillance and Epidemiology Branch of the CHP maintains a comprehensive network of communicable disease notifications, conducts detailed epidemiological investigations on disease outbreaks, and institutes appropriate control measures and health advice to stop disease propagation. It collects, collates, analyzes, and disseminates surveillance data on communicable diseases, coordinates notification system for communicable disease in the Pearl River Delta Region, and develops specialized expertise in the surveillance of targeted infections of public health importance. It is also responsible for surveillance and control of non-communicable diseases of significance to the Hong Kong population as well as related risk factors and formulation

of strategies/action plans in relation to promotion of healthy diet and physical activity participation, cancer prevention, reduction on alcohol-related harm and injury prevention, etc.

Public Health Laboratory Services Branch: The Public Health Laboratory Services Branch of the CHP provides quality clinical diagnostic and public health laboratory services to the public and private health sectors. It comprises four functional Divisions, namely, Microbiology Division, Histopathology & Cytology Division, Chemical Pathology & Haematology Division and Neonatal Screening Division. They are centralized in the Public Health Laboratory Centre and the Clinical Pathology Laboratory Centre.

Infection Control Branch: In order to prevent and control infectious diseases, the Infection Control Branch of the CHP plays an active role in developing, promulgating and evaluating best practices in infection control at health care and non-health care settings. The Branch also supports epidemiological investigations of communicable disease outbreaks in hospitals, conducts surveillance on infection hazards and organises training in infection control and infectious disease management for all levels of health staff.

Tuberculosis and Chest Service: The Tuberculosis and Chest Service is one of the three services under the Public Health Services Branch of the CHP. It plays a key role in the prevention and control of tuberculosis. Its main activities cover the surveillance of tuberculosis, case finding, supervised chemotherapy, BCG vaccination programme for newborns, health education and research. The Service operates chest clinics providing out-patient service to patients suffering from tuberculosis and various chest diseases. It also runs a Pneumoconiosis Clinic which performs compensation assessment.

Special Preventive Programme: Under the Public Health Services Branch of the CHP, the Special Preventive Programme (SPP) is responsible for the prevention, surveillance and clinical management of HIV/AIDS and the prevention of viral hepatitis in Hong Kong. Services range from hotlines, HIV counseling and testing, clinical consultations, treatment, nursing care to psychosocial support. The main HIV treatment service is provided at the Integrated Treatment Centre at Kowloon Bay Health Centre. The HIV prevention and health promotion programme is delivered largely by the Red Ribbon Centre.

Social Hygiene Service: The Social Hygiene Service under the Public Health Services Branch of the CHP is responsible for the prevention and control of sexually transmitted infections (STI). It also operates dermatology clinics for the management of skin diseases including leprosy. In the control of STI, social hygiene clinics provide walk-in service for consultation, counseling and medical treatment for patients with STIs. Nursing staff carry out contact tracing, health education and outreach activities to control the spread of STI.

Emergency Response and Information Branch: The Emergency Response and Information Branch of the CHP develops contingency plans and co-ordinates drills to increase the preparedness for public health crisis. At times of communicable disease outbreaks, it will act as the information coordinator to ensure the timeliness, responsiveness and consistency of information flow.

The Programme Management and Professional Development Branch: It coordinates with and provides secretariat support for the Board of Scientific Advisers

and various Scientific Committees of CHP. It liaises with international and regional health authorities to facilitate collaboration activities, coordinates visits and exchange programmes with international, regional and local institutions, and coordinates applied researches including research projects conducted in collaboration with universities, the Hospital Authority and other government departments. Its work also includes organizing professional development activities for healthcare professionals and providing secretariat support to the Council for the AIDS Trust Fund. The Branch plans and implements the various Government's free vaccination programmes and vaccination subsidy schemes. It also coordinates with relevant departments to perform quarantine operations in quarantine centres, and assists in development and review of emergency response plans for infectious diseases.

ROLE OF HEALTH ADVOCACY AND PROMOTION

Health promotion actions in support of the "Action Plan to Promote Healthy Diet and Physical Activity Participation in Hong Kong", public acceptance of organ donation after death and prevention of communicable diseases are actively pursued by the Central Health Education Unit. The unit carries out publicity campaigns, fosters partnership and collaboration with stakeholders, and uses and setting-based approaches (e.g. schools, restaurants, workplaces, etc.) to achieve the goal.

Also, the Community Liaison Division promotes the above projects through connections with the District Councils, healthy cities projects and community organisations.

OTHER PREVENTIVE SERVICES

Family Health Service: The Family Health Service consists of Maternal and Child Health Service and Woman Health Service. The Maternal and Child Health Service includes antenatal and postnatal care, family planning and cervical screening services. Immunisation against childhood infectious diseases, health and developmental surveillance are offered to children. Anticipatory guidance on childcare and parenting are given to parents. For Woman Health Service, health education, counseling, physical examination and appropriate screening tests are provided to women to address their health needs. Health information on various child and woman health topics are made available to clients in different formats.

Student Health Service: The Service aims to promote the health of school children. A comprehensive range of promotive and preventive services which cater for the health needs of the students at various stages of their development is provided at the student health service centres. Services include physical examination, health assessment, individual counselling and health education. Students found to have problems will be referred to a special assessment centre or appropriate specialists for further management. The Adolescent Health Programme is an outreaching service for secondary school students. It aims to promote the psychosocial health of adolescents by helping them to develop the necessary attitude and skills to face the challenges of growing up.

Elderly Health Service: The Elderly Health Service promotes the health of the elderly population through operating elderly health centres and visiting health teams. The elderly health centres provide a comprehensive primary health care programme encompassing health assessment, counseling, treatment and health education to enrolled elderly aged 65 and above. Visiting health teams reach into the community and residential care settings to disseminate information on healthy

ageing, offer professional advice to service providers, and provide support and training to carers of the elderly.

Dental Service: Preventive and promotive oral health care services to the public are rendered through the School Dental Care Service (SDCS) and Oral Health Education Unit (OHEU). The SDCS promotes oral hygiene and provides basic and preventive dental care to primary school children through the school dental clinics. The OHEU promotes oral health to all sectors of the community through unit-based oral health education activities, school-based oral health promotion programmes and territory-wide Love Teeth Campaigns.

Tobacco Control Office: The mission of the Tobacco Control Office is to nurture a smoke-free culture in Hong Kong through intersectoral collaboration and community mobilization. The priority functions of the Tobacco Control Office are to enhance compliance with the Smoking (Public Health) Ordinance and Fixed Penalty (Smoking Offences) Ordinance as well as assisting the Food and Health Bureau in reviewing the tobacco control legislation.

Clinical Genetic Service: The Clinical Genetic Service provides comprehensive genetic services on a territory-wide basis, playing a primary role in genetic diagnosis, counselling and prevention. It comprises the Genetic Counselling Unit which offers genetic diagnostic and counselling services, and the Genetic Screening Unit which operates the Neonatal Screening Programme for

two congenital disorders, namely glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase (G6PD) deficiency and congenital hypothyroidism.

Child Assessment Service: The Child Assessment Service operates six centres to provide comprehensive assessments for children under 12 years old with developmental problems through a multidisciplinary team approach. The service also formulates rehabilitation plan after developmental diagnosis and provide support to parents through counselling, talks and support groups.

OTHER SERVICES

Drug Treatment and Rehabilitation Service: The outpatient-based voluntary methadone treatment programme includes both maintenance and detoxification options for opioids abusers. It helps patients lead a normal life and be gainfully employed. It also reduces the risk of drug overdose, drug-related deaths and transmission of blood-borne diseases.

Forensic Pathology Service: The Forensic Pathology Service provides professional services in forensic pathology and clinical forensic medicine to Government departments. It is also responsible for the operation and management of public mortuaries.

MORE INFORMATION

Information on services provided by the Department can be obtained from the home page at <http://www.dh.gov.hk/>.