



HONG KONG : THE FACTS



Public Health

Hong Kong's population of about 7.32 million at year-end 2015 is provided with a comprehensive range of medical and health services by the public and private sectors.

The Department of Health (DH) is the Government's health adviser and regulatory authority. It safeguards community health through a range of promotional, preventive, curative and rehabilitative services.

The Hospital Authority (HA) is an independent body responsible for the management of all public hospitals. It provides medical treatment and rehabilitation services to patients through hospitals, specialist clinics and outreach services.

As at end December 2015, the number of hospital beds were 38 287¹, comprising 27 895 beds in 42 public hospitals and institutions under the HA, 4 014 beds in 11 private hospitals, 5 498 beds in 59 nursing homes and 880 beds in correctional institutes. The bed-population ratio was about 5.2 beds per thousand population. Comparable figures in other countries are: Britain 2.8 (2013), the United States 2.9 (2012), Japan 13.3 (2013), Korea 11.0 (2013), Malaysia 1.9 (2013) and Singapore 3.2 (2014).

As at end December 2015, there were 13 726 medical practitioners registered with the Hong Kong Medical Council —12 981 on the resident list and 745 on the non-resident list, equivalent to 1.9 medical practitioners per thousand population. In Britain, there were 3.7 (2014), in the United States, 3.3 (2013), in Japan, 2.3 (2012), in Korea, 2.6 (2013), in Malaysia, 1.0 (2013), and in Singapore, 3.0 (2014) doctors per thousand population. The numbers of medical practitioners working in the DH and the HA are about 511 and 5 107 respectively.

Apart from medical practitioners, Hong Kong citizens also consult Chinese medicine practitioners for cure and prevention of illness. As at end December 2015, there were 7 071 registered Chinese medicine practitioners, 55 Chinese medicine practitioners with limited registration and 2 661 listed Chinese medicine practitioners.

Government/Public Services: At the end of 2015, the DH operates 31 maternal and child health centres on Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories. In addition, the HA runs 47 specialist out-patient clinics and 73 general out-patient clinics throughout Hong Kong.

In the more populous areas, polyclinics or specialist clinics provide specialist clinic sessions besides general out-patient services. Evening general out-patient sessions are held at 23 clinics in the more densely populated areas and 12 of them also operate on Sundays and public holidays.

Medical treatment at a government general out-patient clinic costs \$45 a visit for Hong Kong residents, which includes the costs of prescriptions, pathology investigations, radiology, etc. If the patient requires a specialist's opinion, he is referred to a specialist clinic for consultation, which costs him \$100 for the first attendance,

\$60 for follow-up and \$10 per drug item. For patients with financial difficulties in paying the medical fees and charges, there are established mechanism for applying waiver. Maternity and child health guidance, including antenatal and postnatal care of the mother and the entire immunisation programme for the child, is also free.

In 2015, the total number of attendances at government and the HA out-patient clinics were about 6.22 million and 16.1 million respectively. Cases of acute illness and accident casualties are carried by ambulance to the Accident and Emergency Department of Queen Mary Hospital, Ruttonjee Hospital or Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital on Hong Kong Island; St. John Hospital in Cheung Chau; Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Kwong Wah Hospital, Caritas Medical Centre or United Christian Hospital in Kowloon; and Alice Ho Miu Ling Nethersole Hospital, North District Hospital, Princess Margaret Hospital, Pok Oi Hospital, Prince of Wales Hospital, Tuen Mun Hospital, Tseung Kwan O Hospital, Yan Chai Hospital or North Lantau Hospital in the New Territories. For Hong Kong residents, the charge for attendance at Accident and Emergency Department is \$100.

Hong Kong residents staying in the general wards of public hospitals are charged \$50 for the admission fee, \$100 maintenance fee per day occupying acute beds (or \$68 per day occupying non-acute beds). The maintenance fee includes charges for clinical, biochemical and pathology investigations, vaccines and general nursing, where such examinations or treatments are necessary, and prescriptions within the scale provided at the hospitals. Similarly, patients with financial difficulties can apply for waivers under established mechanism. In 2015, there were about 1 660 000 discharge episodes in public hospitals.

The HA's Community Nursing Service provides further care to patients discharged from hospitals in their homes.

Private Services: Fees charged by private practitioners in Hong Kong vary, usually from about \$180 to \$650; and more for a specialist consultation. In some cases, these fees include the cost of medicine, but separate charges are often made. Patients also have to pay extra for laboratory tests, X-ray examinations, etc.

As at the end of 2015, there were 11 private hospitals, including Canossa Hospital (Caritas), Evangel Hospital, Hong Kong Adventist Hospital – Stubbs Road, Hong Kong Adventist Hospital – Tsuen Wan, Hong Kong Baptist Hospital, the Hong Kong Sanatorium & Hospital Limited, Matilda & War Memorial Hospital, Precious Blood Hospital (Caritas), St. Paul's Hospital, St. Teresa's Hospital and Union Hospital.

In 2014, about 370 000 in-patients discharges were recorded in these hospitals. The daily charge for a hospital bed varies from several hundred dollars to several

thousand dollars, depending on the room type. Patients have to pay for all charges of hospital services, such as medicines and laboratory tests, besides the fees charged by the attending doctors.

Medical Clinics: Clinics registered under the Medical Clinics Ordinance are required to be re-registered annually. At the end of 2015, there were 102 clinics registered under this ordinance. The non-profit making medical clinics generally provide low-cost medical care.

Student Health Service: To promote the health of school children, DH established a total of 12 student health service centres and three special assessment centres. In 2015, centres provided services to over 700 000 Primary and Secondary school students. 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.

Preventive Services: Hong Kong people have continued to enjoy good health. Extensive preventive measures are implemented by the Government through its Family Health Service, Elderly Health Service, Port Health Service, Student Health Service, School Dental Care Service as well as many other community health services.

Children are given a series of immunisations against eleven childhood infectious diseases in maternal and child health centres under the DH. Family planning service is also available at a charge of \$1 for every visit.

These preventive services have contributed to Hong Kong's remarkably low infant and maternal mortality rates, which are comparable to the best in the world. They have also reduced the risk of spread of epidemics of major communicable diseases in Hong Kong, one of the most densely populated cities in the world.

Chinese Medicine: The Chinese Medicine Ordinance was passed by the Legislative Council in July 1999 to establish a statutory regulatory framework to control the practice, use, manufacture and trading of Chinese medicines. The regulatory framework will enhance public health protection and greatly improve public confidence in the use of Chinese medicine. Under the Chinese Medicine Ordinance, the Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong was set up to be responsible for implementing various regulatory measures.

As at December 2015, 18 Chinese Medicine Centres for Training and Research have been operated by non-governmental organizations in the tripartite mode of collaboration among HA, non-governmental organizations and local universities. For eligible persons, \$120 per attendance is charged for Chinese Medicine general consultation service, as provided by the Chinese Medicine Centres for Training and Research.

[†] The number of hospital beds includes all hospital beds in Hospital Authority hospitals, private hospitals, nursing homes and correctional institutions, which follows the coverage of the Hospitals, Nursing Homes and Maternity Homes Registration Ordinance (Cap. 165) of Hong Kong. The bed-population ratio may not be directly comparable with figures for other countries as other countries may adopt different definition of total hospital beds.