

Application for Re-naming of PIID Subspecialty to PIAID

Background of our Re-naming Application

The existing subspecialty of Paediatric Immunology and Infectious Diseases (PIID) of Hong Kong College of Paediatricians (HKCPaed), established in 2012, intends to apply for the re-naming to “Paediatric Immunology, Allergy and Infectious Diseases” (PIAID). This decision already endorsed by the PIID Subspecialty Board was based on a major component of allergy both in the training curriculum of our subspecialty as well as in the case load and daily clinical practice of PIID subspecialists. Such re-naming is also comparable to the working and training areas of clinical immunologists in some other countries, notably the United Kingdom. Therefore, the PIID Subspecialty Board would like to submit an application to Clinical Subspecialty Board of HKCPaed for the re-naming to PIAID.

Our Board is well aware of the fact that the PIID subspecialty was accredited by HKCPaed based on its current training programme in 2012, and such was also duly approved by the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine. On the other hand, our Board would like to emphasise that immunology, allergy and infectious diseases are three integral components with equal ratings in our approved training curriculum. Details of our programme can be found at: http://www.paediatrician.org.hk/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&gid=566&Itemid=66. All PIID trainees will be required to fulfill the training requirements of these three clinical areas before they are allowed to sit for the subspecialty examination. In the coming first board examination in October 2017, our Board has meticulously set three separate stations each chaired by a pair of relevant external examiners or local subspecialty experts to examine the trainees on clinical immunology, allergy and infectious diseases separately.

The *Clinical Subspecialty Board* requested our PIID Board to provide a written document to address the following three questions:

1. Justification for the change
2. The difference between existing name and renaming by adding ‘Allergy’ to the name
3. The advantages on the renaming

Our Board would like to give the following elaborations on these questions below:

Justification for Re-naming our Subspecialty

Infectious diseases account for the majority of paediatric admissions in Hong Kong, and which can exacerbate the many children with allergic diseases such as asthma, eczema and chronic urticaria. About one-third of local children suffer from some form of allergic diseases, which are shown to be caused by dysregulated immune responses as well as dysbiosis of endogenous microbiota at body sites such as gut, airway and skin. Besides, autoimmune and allergic diseases are common even among the rare group of children with primary immunodeficiency diseases. Therefore, the clinical areas of immunology, allergy and infectious diseases are closely linked in which the subspecialist need to grasp a firm mastery of all relevant knowledge and skills in order to offer quality management to patients with these clinically diverse diseases. On the clinical side, there is a heavy burden of

allergic diseases in Hong Kong as well as a clear unmet need of paediatricians trained in this field.

Consistent with the view of our Board, the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) had revised the name and training curriculum of this subspecialty in the United Kingdom several years ago. Effective from 1st August 2015, General Medical Council of the United Kingdom has formally recognised “Paediatric Allergy, Immunology and Infectious Diseases” as a subspecialty in Paediatrics (<http://www.gmc-uk.org/education/25370.asp>). The detailed training curriculum of this PAIID subspecialty can be found at the link: http://www.gmc-uk.org/April_2015_Paediatric_Allergy_Immunology_and_Infectious_Diseases_Curriculum.pdf_60880612.pdf. The curricula of our PIID subspecialty and that of RCPCH are comparable in terms of training duration and emphasis on immunology, allergy and infectious diseases.

Under the UK model, RCPCH advocates as broad as possible exposure to the diversity of this subspecialty, with particular attention to a solid foundation in the science of immunology. An Allergy, Immunology and Infectious Diseases Paediatrician is a doctor who works across all age groups to investigate, diagnose and manage infectious, immunological and allergic disorders. There are three routes for training in this subspecialty: Paediatric Immunology (PIM), Paediatric Infectious Diseases and Immunology (PID), and Paediatric Allergy and Immunology (PAI). Most subspecialists will have one primary area of interest but will have some training in all three areas. All three training routes will lead to the award of subspecialist accreditation in Paediatric Allergy, Immunology and Infectious Diseases, with the trainees being enlisted for completion of these three clinical areas on their Certificate of Completion of Training documentation regardless of the emphasis of training. The PAIID paediatricians usually practise in centres with co-located supporting tertiary services (immunology, microbiology and virology laboratories).

Differences between Existing Name (PIID) and Re-naming by Adding ‘Allergy’ (PIAID)

The management of allergic diseases forms a major clinical workload of our trainees during and after graduation from our training curriculum. Our re-naming application will be a formal recognition of our training curriculum and scope to be covered by PIAID. Other non-allergy specialists may claim that they practise allergy, but there is no proof that they have undergone an appropriate/rigorous training in the subspecialty of allergy as approved by Colleges and Academy. Thus, the renaming of PIID to PIAID also reinforces to the medical profession and general public the fact that formal training in allergy in close association with immunology and infectious diseases exists in our College.

Our Board would like to emphasise that this re-naming will in no way stop other subspecialties to care for allergy patients and to set aside part of their curriculum on allergy. In fact, many children with allergic diseases will need multidisciplinary care. Nonetheless, the PIAID subspecialists have been accredited through vigorous postgraduate training to be competent in specialised tasks and skills such as allergen-specific immunotherapy to inhalants, venom and foods; drug and food testing and provocation; and use of biologics for treating a variety of allergic and inflammatory diseases.

Finally, the adult counterpart of our Subspecialty is Immunology and Allergy under the Hong Kong College of Physicians. In the eyes of the patients and profession, it would seem more

seamless and logical for allergic children and their families to transition from PIAID experts under our College to the Immunology and Allergy subspecialists as these young patients grow into adolescence and adulthood.

The Advantages and Significance of this Re-naming

In the absence of “allergy specialists”, these patients may suffer because they may find it hard to get state-of-the-art medicine and diagnostics that will enhance the care of their allergic diseases. Pharmaceutical companies are also less likely to register their products in a country without such specialists where they may expect the new drugs to be rarely prescribed. Furthermore, there is a high probability that the general public be introduced a range of unproven diagnostic procedures (e.g. food-specific IgG testing) and therapies (e.g. chelation or magnetic field treatment) for allergic diseases in the absence of advocates from the publicly recognised and well-trained paediatric allergy subspecialists. The last issue will cause harms to these childhood allergy sufferers. Finally, with a lack of a significant representation of “Allergy” in the name of our current PIID Subspecialty, it will be difficult to attract junior doctors to enter the field to receive training for the clinical area of paediatric allergy as well as for the public to recognise our expertise in “Allergy”.

Based on the above reasons, it is critical for the subspecialists from our Board to be enlisted with the appropriate name that reflects the breadth of their training. Such proper recognition will also increase the profile of allergy in Hong Kong and encourage more trainees interested in this clinical area to join our training programme to meet the unmet needs in allergy service. The latter point will be very difficult to achieve when “Allergy” is not in the name of our subspecialty. Thus, the re-naming from PIID to PIAID describes more accurately the substance of our discipline.

Endorsed by Prof YL Lau, Chairman of the PIID Subspecialty Board

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