

**Response of the Hong Kong College of Paediatricians
to
Your Health, Your Life: Healthcare Reform consultation Document**

Date: 27 May 2008

The Hong Kong College of Paediatricians appreciates the vision and effort of the government in preparing for the future of our health care. We would like to respond to the consultation document focusing on the health and welfare of children.

Enhance Primary Care

We agree that primary care if provided effectively will successfully prevent disease and reduce expensive specialist-led hospital care. Medical problems of infants and children are very different from those encountered in adulthood. The training curriculum of our College encompasses the diverse physical and psychological problems of children from birth to adolescence. Paediatricians are not just trained to manage complex hospital problems, at least half of their training are spent in general paediatrics dealing with common conditions. If paediatric specialists opt to practice in the community after completion of training, they would manage most problems encountered competently and independently without the need for further referral to secondary care, and therefore would be the most appropriate doctor to provide primary care to this age group. Proficiency in engaging children, adolescents and parents, as well as ability to adopt a holistic family approach are essential qualities of paediatricians over other doctors.

Promote Public-Private Partnership in Healthcare

In promoting public private partnership and offering the public more choices in health care services, a comparably effective system for quality assurance and peer review in both the public and private sectors needs to be in place.

Develop Health Record Sharing

Our College supports the development of electronic health record sharing. We appreciate that input from paediatricians will be sought for in the developmental phase to cater for special features in a child's medical record such as birth history, immunisation, growth curve and paediatric drug dosages, to name but a few.

Reform Health Care Financing Arrangements

Our college realised the need of supplementary financing to maintain a sustainable health care system. Some of the consequences include an increase in charges of public medical services and increase in utilization of private medical services. We request the following principles to be upheld:

1. Preventive services such as childhood immunization and surveillance should continue to be provided free-of-charge.
2. Catastrophic medical conditions and some chronic medical illnesses requiring costly treatments are unlikely to be affordable by the general public. In addition to conditions similar to adults such as malignancy, examples specific to children include preterm infants, congenital abnormalities, inherited diseases and metabolic diseases. Treatment of these conditions should continue to be heavily subsidized no matter what supplementary financing options are eventually selected.
3. Treatment of some rare diseases may be extremely expensive. Additional budget need to be allocated centrally for such treatments so that the resources for existing services will not be jeopardized.

4. When health insurance is a financing option, we must ensure that patients with existing medical conditions should not be discriminated in form of rejection or loaded premium. Mandatory health insurance, if adopted, should not be confined to working population. Although children and adolescents have no income, they are the future of our society and should be protected by the health insurance scheme. As an advocate for children, our College would support public subsidy for the insurance premium for children and adolescents.
5. In considering mandatory health insurance as an option, the scheme should not be profit making, the administrative cost and the extra administrative work imposed on health care workers should also be minimised.

We understand that this consultation document focuses on health financing, details of service organisation and delivery remain to be discussed.