

HONG KONG COLLEGE OF PAEDIATRICIANS

Final Report
by the “Task Force for Higher Training
of Paediatric Subspecialties”

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Final Report of the “Task Force for Higher Training of Paediatric Subspecialties”

Preamble

The Hong Kong College of Paediatricians has a statutory responsibility to ensure the standard and quality of paediatric practice through a reliable system of training, accreditation, and continuous professional development. Since its establishment in 1991, the College has developed its Training Program in General Paediatrics which has been running effectively. The question of subspecialty training and accreditation which is necessary to develop tertiary and quaternary services, has been raised more than a decade ago at the Forum on Higher Training Programme held at Hong Kong Sanatorium on 25 April 1997. At that stage, the College has resolved to award only Fellowship in General Paediatrics (F.H.K.C.Paed) without any subspecialty designation after the 6-years training programme.

Another Forum was convened by the College on 22 September 1998 at the Grantham Hospital with invited representatives from 13 paediatric subspecialties. The consensus opinion at that time was that general paediatrics should form the foundation of any subspecialty development, that the College has no agenda on when, how and in what order subspecialties would be established in Hong Kong, and that any promotion of subspecialties should coincide with the service needs and service development directions of the Hospital Authority, Department of Health and the Private Sector. After the forum, the convenors of each subspecialty group were invited to submit their first report on the current situation and the need for their subspecialty development in Hong Kong.

The Work of the Task Force

The Task Force for Higher Training of Paediatric Subspecialties was appointed by the College Council on 4th May 2000, with membership from the College Accreditation, Education, Membership, Examination and Review Committees, as well as representatives from the Department of Health, the Hospital Authority, University Departments of Paediatrics, and College Fellows (please see appendix 1 for membership). The Task Force was designated the duty to study the current status of paediatric subspecialties and to make recommendations to the College Council on development of higher training in paediatric subspecialties in Hong Kong.

The Task Force convened a Meeting with the Subspecialty Groups, Chiefs of Service, Training Supervisors and Paediatric Consultants of Training Units on 22nd February 2002 at the Academy Building to update participants on progress of the work of the Task Force, provide information and collect opinions as well as feedback on the proposed Questionnaires from all subspecialty groups. This was followed by excellent exchange of views and opinions regarding the subject matter and 15 subspecialty groups were requested to submit their completed Questionnaires before end of June 2002 to facilitate

consideration of accreditation of higher training in the paediatric subspecialties within the College. Thirteen sets of completed Questionnaires were collected from the subspecialty groups (except General Paediatrics, PICU and Adolescent Medicine) by the end of June 2003. Results were carefully studied and summarized (Appendix 2).

In addition to the consultation of paediatric colleagues, the Task Force also took reference of the following important papers from the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine on Accreditation of New Specialty/Subspecialty.

- 1) HKAM Education Committee Papers on Accreditation of New Specialty/Subspecialty
 - a) Guidelines on Recognition of a Specialty/Subspecialty issued in 1997 (Appendix 3)
 - b) Guidelines for Admission of “First Fellows” in New Subspecialty issued in August 2003 (Appendix 4):
 - i) the name “First Fellow” would be used for the first batch of Fellows admitted in a new subspecialty
 - ii) the admission criteria for “New Fellows”
 - iii) the cut-off date and date of the first examination after recognition and adoption of the new subspecialty

These two documents would be used as reference for our College subspecialty board governance and criteria for accreditation.

- 2) Reference to Subspecialty Documents from other Academy Colleges

These documents and practical experience in the management of subspecialty boards within the sister Colleges would be valuable source of information and reference for the Task Force in accreditation considerations.

In January 2004, the Task Force produced the Guideline on the Criteria for the Accreditation of a Paediatric Subspecialty Training Programme (Appendix 5) and the Application Form for Accreditation of a Paediatric Subspecialty (Appendix 6). These were endorsed by the College Council at the 88th Council meeting on 6 January 2004. A full set of Guideline, together with the Application Form, has been sent to all subspecialty groups, all Chiefs of Service, Training Supervisors, Consultants and Fellows of the College. It was also made available for downloading from the College website.

Two important issues were also discussed and endorsed by the College Council:

1. Double Fellowship: Council decided to adopt the title “Double Fellowship” for subspecialists in future instead of the previous proposal of “Board Certified” for better flexibility to allow the future subspecialists to opt for listing at the Specialists Register of the Medical Council of Hong Kong and to be in good alignment with subspecialists within the Academy Sister Colleges.
2. College Criteria for Admission of First Fellow: The Task Force takes reference to the Guidelines for Admission of “First Fellows” in New Subspecialty issued by the Academy in August 2003. In addition, the Task Force has also suggested the

admission criteria for First Fellows as follows:

“A First Fellow in a subspecialty must be a Fellow of the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine (Paediatrics) and has undergone recognized supervised training in that subspecialty for 3 years. For Fellows who have not undergone a formal supervised training in that subspecialty for 3 years, he/she should have *a period of full-time supervised training (which should normally be not less than 6 months) in a recognized centre*. In addition, the 3 years of the stipulated accredited subspecialty training programme should be made up with a period of good independent practice in that subspecialty of twice of the duration required for the 3 years accredited training programme. The assurance of the standard and quality of the good independent practice should be supported by documentation of the workload in that subspecialty as well as relevant educational activities, such as publications, grand rounds and audit activities, conducted during the claimed period. The Subspecialty Board has the full discretion and final decision on the accreditation of individual Fellows. The Board decision should be submitted to the Task Force who would seek final endorsement from the College Council.” This was approved by College Council at the 91st Council Meeting on 6 July 2004.

It was further clarified with the Academy that

1. Retrospective accreditation of subspecialty training using the 6-year of good independent practice rule would only be applicable to the admission of First Fellows.
2. After the start of admission of trainees into a new subspecialty training programme (the cut-off date for admission of First Fellow), all subsequent applicants to become Fellow in that subspecialty must have undergone (a) an accredited 3-year full-time training programme in an accredited local institution; or (b) a 3-year full-time training programme in an overseas institution which has been assessed by our College to be comparable in standard to our local training programme.
3. No additional or remedial training would be possible for trainees in a subspecialty who could not fulfill the criteria to be admitted as First Fellow by the cut-off date. (Appendix 7: post-meeting note – 9th TF Meeting on 23 Jun 04)

A 2nd meeting with all Subspecialty Groups, all Chiefs of Service, Training Supervisors, Paediatric Consultants of Training Units was held on 11 February 2004 at the Academy Building to update participants on the progress of work of the Task Force. The updated *Guidelines and Criteria for Accreditation of Higher Training in Paediatric Subspecialties* and the *Application Form for Application of Subspecialty Accreditation* were presented and explained followed by interactive discussions between members of the Task Force and the audience. Logistics of application procedures and provisional framework of implementation were also discussed.

Since the 2nd consultative meeting, the Task Force met further and finalized the logistics and process of vetting applications of paediatric subspecialties (Appendix 8).

From 2004 till 2008, the College has not received any applications from any subspecialty groups. The Task Force reiterated that subspecialty development was not mandatory and only subspecialties which were mature and ready would be accredited. Accreditation of subspecialty should be stringent and responsible. The following criteria should be considered for defining a subspecialty, namely 1. parallel cases in other places, 2. appropriateness and relevance of the training programme, 3. sustainability, 4. mechanism for monitoring, 5. external assessors' views.

On the other hand, subspecialty development at the level of professional organizations was also well established. As shown in the following list, there are currently ten paediatric subspecialty societies in Hong Kong, some of which have been established for more than 10 years:

- Hong Kong Society for Adolescent Medicine
- Hong Kong Society of Child Neurology and Developmental Paediatrics
- Hong Kong Society of Paediatric Endocrinology and Metabolism
- Hong Kong Society of Paediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition
- Hong Kong Paediatric Haematology and Oncology Study Group
- Hong Kong Society of Paediatric Immunology and Infectious Diseases
- Hong Kong Society of Neonatal Medicine
- Hong Kong Paediatric Nephrology Society
- Hong Kong Society of Paediatric Respiriology
- Hong Kong Society of Inborn Errors of Metabolism

Many paediatric training units in public hospitals also have well established subspecialty teams and clinics. The College has also accredited the training status of such subspecialty teams for the purpose of General Paediatric Training Programme.

With the planning of Centre of Excellence in Paediatrics (CEP) by the Hong Kong Government, there is urgency for the Hong Kong College of Paediatricians to prepare for the tertiary subspecialty services in it. Thus a third Forum on subspecialty development was organized by the College at the HKAM Building on 16th July 2008. It was well attended by representatives of various subspecialty societies or groups, and the chiefs of service/training supervisors of various paediatric training units. In the forum, an updated accreditation guideline, the application/vetting procedures and implications of subspecialty development were presented. There were in depth and frank exchange of opinions among various participants.

At the last Task Force Meeting on 18th August 2008, the opinions/questions gathered at the third Forum were further discussed and summarize. It was also decided that the Task Force has already accomplished its task of laying down the groundwork of subspecialty accreditation, and it should be replaced by a Working Group on Accreditation of Paediatric Subspecialties with a broader terms of reference and membership (Appendix 9). This was approved by the College Council on 9th September 2008.

The Task Force would like to take this opportunity to show our appreciation to the guidance of our College Presidents Professor Leung Nai Kong, Professor Fok Tai Fai and Professor Louis Low, support from the College Council and members of the Task Force and active participation from the trainers (Chiefs of Service and Training Supervisions) as well as all College Fellows. All these sets momentum and direction for the work of the Task Force which ultimate enable us to achieve our mission. To all their contributions, we say thank you and we look forward to their continual support to the Working Party in the future.



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Task Force for Higher Training of Paediatric Subspecialties

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- Appendix 3: Guidelines on specialty / subspecialty formation, by HK Academy of Medicine
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- Appendix 5: Guideline on the Criteria for the Accreditation of a Paediatric Subspecialty Training Programme, adopted by HK College of Paediatricians
- Appendix 6: Application Form for Accreditation of a Paediatric Subspecialty for HK College of Paediatricians
- Appendix 7: Post-meeting notes – 9th Task Force Meeting, 23 June 2004.
- Appendix 8: Logistics of vetting a subspecialty application.
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