

Health Care Voucher Scheme for the Elderly

Department of Health, Hong Kong

Hong Kong

September 2, 2008

The Government is going to implement a Health Care Voucher Scheme (HCVS) on a trial basis from 2009 to 2011 to partially subsidise the elderly for using private primary care service.

The remark was made by the Deputy Director of Health, Dr Gloria Tam, at a press conference today (September 9).

Under the scheme, members of the public aged 70 or above and holding a valid Hong Kong Identity Card or a Valid Certificate of Exemption would be given annually five health care vouchers worth \$50 each to partially subsidise primary medical care services they purchase from private sector.

Dr Tam said a steering committee involving Food and Health Bureau, the Department of Health, the Hospital Authority and the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer was set up to carry forward the initiative.

"The committee consulted relevant professional bodies of the private health care sector and the relevant professional councils on the scheme earlier this year.

"It also consulted the legislative Council Panel on Health Services and obtained funding support from the Finance Committee for the scheme," Dr Tam noted.

She said that the scheme would be operated on an electronic platform (the eHealth System).

"Healthcare vouchers will be issued and used through the system and will not be issued in paper form separately. Eligible people do not have to pre-register or collect the vouchers.

"This arrangement will avoid problems such as loss of vouchers or failure to bring along vouchers," Dr Tam said.

The vouchers can be used for services provided by western medical practitioners, Chinese medicine practitioners, dentists, chiropractors, registered nurses and enrolled nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, radiographers and medical laboratory technologists.

"They are valid throughout the three-year period. Unused vouchers may be

retained for use in the following year or the last year of the scheme. But no advance of vouchers which are yet to be used will be allowed," Dr Tam said.

Eligible elderly are only required to approach a participating provider of their choice and use the vouchers by producing their valid Hong Kong Identity Cards or certificate of exemption.

Private health care providers interested in taking part in HCVS are required to enroll with the Department of Health (DH) starting September 30.

DH will send invitation letters to all eligible service providers later this month. Relevant information will be available at the HCVS website (www.hcv.gov.hk) starting September 30, 2008. Enrolment can be made online or by post.

Participating service providers are required to display the designated logo at their workplaces for identification.

To enhance public awareness of the scheme, DH will launch a series of publicity and promotional programmes in the community, Dr Tam said.

Details of the HCVS are available at a thematic website (www.hcv.gov.hk).

Courtesy: <http://www.globalaging.org/health/world/2008/voucher.htm>