

Public Policy Forum on Hong Kong Healthcare Reform

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Summary Notes of Discussion

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1. Health Care in Hong Kong

- Hong Kong is proud of its low mortality rate and longevity of its people. A good health care system, however, should also place emphasis on the quality of life.
- There has been no vision for health care in Hong Kong. We need to examine what the existing situation is and envisage what we want Hong Kong to be over a certain period of time. Health care goals should be set accordingly.

2. Health Care Reform & Financing

- Why it is necessary to mix the two together? Can't we just proceed with structural reform?
- It seems that the Consultation Document is all about asking for more money from the public. It does not explain:
 - why more money is needed?
 - how the money raised will be used?
 - how Government will ensure that the reform will succeed?

3. Primary Care

- The team approach proposed by speakers is the right way forward but the public needs to be educated about its importance.
- How can the underprivileged afford the costs of primary care, such as regular body check-ups?
- Is there any evidence showing that better primary care can reduce total health care costs? A local study is needed.

4. Financing

- A question has to be asked: does more money guarantees better results?
- While self-responsibility should be promoted, Government commitment is equally important.
- Those who can afford to pay more should pay more.
- The idea of increasing public sector fees while imposing a cap can be considered.

However, a second safety net should be established for the underprivileged.

- When we talk about increasing tax, people usually think of salaries tax which means extra burden for the middle class. However, Government can look for other options, such as increasing stamp duty and using the revenue raised to set up a health care reserve fund.
- The U.S. experience shows that voluntary insurance is not an option.
- If insurance becomes a supplementary funding option, those with insurance may become a preferred class and receive better treatment.
- Though the concept “money follows patients” is worth looking into, it does not help shorten the existing queue in the public sector.

5. Other issues

- Transparency

The public has no say on how the money allocated to the HA is used now. How can government ensure greater transparency?

- Manpower

It is obvious that there is a shortage of health care professionals, including doctors and nurses. Can Government consider importing talents from other places? For example, nurses from the Mainland can be allowed to perform more basic procedures so as to alleviate the workload of local nurses.
