

Tuesday, March 26, 2024

Hospital Authority announces Easter and Ching Ming Festival Public Holidays Service Arrangements

The Hospital Authority (HA) announced the service arrangements for Easter and Ching Ming Festival public holidays today (March 26), which includes strengthening public holiday General Out-patient Clinic (GOPC) services and Chinese medicine out-patient services, and implementing special refund arrangement in accident and emergency (A&E) departments to cope with the medical service demand of the public during the long holidays.

The HA spokesperson said, “The HA will closely monitor patients’ demand for consultation at A&E and inpatient services during and after the public holidays, and the statistics on patients infected with COVID-19 and influenza, so as to flexibly mobilise resources to cope with the service demand. It is anticipated that more patients will need consultation service towards the end of the public holidays, that is April 1 to April 7. The HA will flexibly mobilise manpower to enhance GOPC service volume on weekdays, and continue to mobilise hospital beds and enhance support for discharge procedures in order to expedite hospital bed turnover. The geriatric departments will provide assessment and discharge support to elderly people at A&E departments. The community geriatric assessment team will provide tele-consultations to elderly people who are in need and living in residential care homes.”

During Easter and Ching Ming Festival holidays, public holiday GOPC services will provide for a total quota of about 10 000. Apart from the 14 public holiday GOPCs, four GOPCs will provide additional services on April 1. The list and service hours of the GOPCs operating during public holidays are set out in Annex I. Members of the public can make appointments of the next 24 hours through the telephone appointment system, or the “Book GOPC” function in the “HA Go” mobile application where necessary.

Chinese Medicine Clinics cum Training and Research Centres (CMCTRs) located in the 18 districts will enhance the government-subsidised Chinese medicine out-patient services providing for a total quota of 12 000 in the period of Easter holidays and the first week of April. Please refer to Annex II for the list of CMCTRs operating during Easter holidays (March 29 to April 1) and their service hours. Concerning the need for consultations during and after the holidays, CMCTRs will also increase their daily quota for episodic appointments by 10% on April 2 and 3 and April 5 and 6. Appointment could be made via phone during service hours or through the “18 CM Clinics” mobile application (applicable to patients who have registered for 18 CMCTRs service).

The Health Bureau has collated information of private hospitals, healthcare

facilities, family doctors and Chinese medicine clinics which will be in operation during the holiday across the city. The information (including addresses, phone numbers and operation hours) of the relevant hospitals and clinics have been uploaded to the online portal (www.map.gov.hk/gm/s/hhbclinic/all) for public reference in collaboration with the Spatial Data Office of the Development Bureau and the Lands Department. Such a move aims to enable citizens in need to look for suitable hospitals or clinics for medical treatment. Citizens can also simply access this online portal via the HA webpage as well as the mobile applications of eHealth and “HA Go”.

The HA spokesperson said, “Learning from the experience of the implementation of the special refund arrangement in A&E departments during Chinese New Year which could facilitate patients with mild symptoms to seek alternative consultations at other medical institutions, so as to alleviate pressure on public hospitals, the HA will implement the arrangement again from March 28 to April 7. The arrangement has been enhanced. Patients who have not been attended to by doctors may make a refund application within 24 hours after registration through the ‘HA Go’ mobile application, apart from applying from healthcare staff. Eligible applicants will receive the refund in approximately one month by cheque in mail, credit card or electronic wallet.”

The HA spokesperson emphasised that patient safety and their clinical situations remain the major concerns of healthcare staff, and they will not allow patients who are clinically indicated for further management to leave. The spokesperson also appeals to non-urgent patients to avoid attending A&E departments. They are advised to attend GOPCs, CMCTRs, private doctors and Chinese medicine practitioners or 24-hour clinics of private hospitals as far as practicable.

Meanwhile, the HA appeals to members of the public to stay vigilant to personal and environmental hygiene to avoid spreading disease during public holidays. Members of the public should get vaccinated early for seasonal influenza and COVID-19, especially high-risk groups, to reduce the chance of getting infected for themselves and their family members, as well as to reduce critical cases and deaths. Members of the public may find details on the Centre for Health Protection COVID-19 Vaccination Programme website (www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/106934.html) and the Vaccination Schemes website (www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/17980.html).

The HA will continue to closely monitor the situation and flexibly deploy resources and manpower when necessary, and will keep increasing its service volume in order to provide appropriate service for patients.

* * * * *