

Message from the Chairman Steering Committee on Doctor Work Hour Hospital Authority



Doctor Work Reform came into being when the Hospital Authority (“HA”) established the Steering Committee on Doctor Work Hour in October 2006 charged with a mission to improve doctors’ morale and working conditions while ensuring the quality and safety of patient care in public hospitals.

The reform is not about mere injection of resources, nor was it meant to play around figures and nourish a clock-watching culture among the healthcare professionals. Rather, it entails a bundle of service transformations which are targeted to provide quality care through teamwork, enhance patient safety by managing operational risks and attain quality hours for service and training.

Spanning across these years, the reform has met with encouraging results and successes, not only in reducing doctor work hours, but also in modernising the workforce, improving the clinical effectiveness of its health services and fostering teamwork in care delivery. Despite the variable reform outcomes in the pilot phase, patients can in general enjoy timely and safer care while the health carers have sharpened core competencies and better career opportunities. Besides, HA has in some areas outrun its overseas counterparts with improved care and enhanced risk management. All these are attributable to extensive stakeholder engagement, pragmatic work reform strategies, unfailing management support and clinical leadership, professionalism and dedication of the health carers and, above all, concerted efforts and collaboration of all who have partaken in the pilot work reform programmes.

The Steering Committee is cognizant of the rising demand for public hospital services under the global financial tsunami and the possible epidemic outbreaks in the community. It also recognises the legal impacts of the recent Court of Final Appeal’s judgment on doctors’ claims and the upcoming Minimum Wage Bill on revamping the conventional mode of on-call services and monitoring of doctor work hours.

As HA has gathered the momentum of work reform in the past years, the management may take forward the reform further and deeper for the ultimate benefits of both patients and health carers in the entire organization. The healthcare resources should be properly used at all times and be prioritised for initiatives that can truly increase the system efficiency, optimise workload, enhance the quality of care and improve staff morale. HA may consider prudently extending its workforce reform to other non-medical disciplines as well so as to attain greater synergy for better care and professional development of its healthcare staff.

Last but not least, I would like to express my deepest thanks to the HA Board and the corporate management, the Steering Committee and advisory committee members, pilot programme task groups, cluster and hospital management, all frontline doctors as well as the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine and its member colleges. Their enormous support, candid sharing, valuable advice and dedicated contribution are all pivotal on the accomplishments of Doctor Work Reform, and fundamental to HA's further attainments in its work reform and workforce development.

I wish HA every success in its coming endeavours. Thank you!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C H Leong', with a long, sweeping line extending from the end of the signature downwards and to the right.

Dr C H LEONG, GBS, JP
Chairman
Steering Committee on Doctor Work Hour
Hospital Authority