

Saturday, 10 January 2026

## Hospital Authority Proactively Assists Patients Majority of Medical Fee Waiver Applications Approved on Same Day

Following the implementation of public healthcare fees and charges reform, the Hospital Authority (HA) has enhanced its medical fee waiver mechanism to facilitate applications from patients with financial needs, strengthening protection for underprivileged and elderly patients. The HA spokesperson announced today (January 10) that the HA proactively assisted eligible citizens in obtaining medical fee waivers before accessing medical services. The HA has processed an average of 5 000 medical fee waiver applications daily. According to approval records, approximately 85% of applications are successfully approved on average, with some hospital clusters reaching nearly 90%, and waivers are issued on the same day. For patients who are unable to provide all required documents at the time of application, "conditional waivers" can be issued within 15 minutes, allowing immediate access to fee reduction. This ensures that no patient is denied from medical care due to lack of means.

The HA reported that 54 658 medical fee waiver applications have been approved to date, including 33 759 cases have completed assessment and received formal waiver certificates. Under normal circumstances, waivers will be issued within approximately one hour of submitting all required documents. For patients who require urgent medical services but are unable to provide the necessary documentation for financial assessment, the HA exercised a flexible arrangement. By signing a declaration stating their financial situation meets the medical fee waiver eligibility criteria, patients can receive approval for "conditional waivers" within 15 minutes. The HA has exercised flexible arrangements to approve 20 899 "conditional waivers". These patients must submit the relevant documents for financial assessment within three months. If patients fail to submit the required documents within the deadline or do not meet the eligibility criteria, they will be required to settle all applicable fees (if any).

“ Patients should allow sufficient time for medical fee waiver applications. For patients without immediate medical needs, it is advisable to begin the application process approximately one to two months before their scheduled appointments. Members of the public can also access information about medical fee waivers, including application procedures and required documents, in advance through the HA website or mobile application HA Go. They can also use the means test calculator to preliminarily evaluate their eligibility, ensuring a smoother application process,” the HA spokesperson reminded.

The spokesperson emphasised that the enhanced medical fee waiver mechanism is a crucial measure of the public healthcare fees and charges reform to strengthen protection for patients facing financial hardship, and therefore requires financial assessment and not everyone will be eligible. Each application must be handled with due diligence for the use of public money. Patients have the responsibility to provide complete, accurate, truthful, and appropriate information for assessment and verification, ensuring that assistance reaches those truly in need.

While ensuring that no patient is denied from medical care due to lack of means, it is also essential to uphold the principle of prudent use of resources to prevent the limited and precious public resources being abused. Moreover, the supporting documents required for medical fee waiver applications are similar to those required for other social welfare or government subsidy schemes.

Patients need to submit income and asset proof documents for financial assessment while applying for medical fee waivers. In addition to common documentary proof such as land or non-owner-occupied property, cash in hand, bank savings, investments in stocks and shares, some applicants may keep cash in other accounts such as e-wallets, Hong Kong Jockey Club betting accounts, or have accessible insurance savings. Patients are also required to provide relevant supporting documents for these assets to accurately assess their eligibility for medical fee waivers. To ensure appropriate use of medical resources and prevent abuse, the HA will conduct regular reviews of approved cases randomly.

The HA has relaxed eligibility criteria and simplified the application procedures with the implementation of enhanced medical fee waiver mechanism. Patients or their family members who are currently receiving Old Age Living Allowance may be exempted from submitting certain documentary proof for financial assessment, with details as follows:

- For a two-member family where both members receive Old Age Living Allowance, the patient only needs to provide proof of receiving the allowance (such as bank statements) and will be exempted from submitting income and asset proof;
- For a two-member family where one member receives Old Age Living Allowance, provision of income proof will be exempted; and
- For a one-member family where the applicant receives Old Age Living Allowance, provision of asset proof will be exempted.

Furthermore, if a patient has household members included in the financial assessment who already possess approved medical fee waiver, the patient will not need to undergo a complete financial assessment. The HA will refer to the financial information submitted during their household member's medical fee waiver application and, depending on the actual circumstances, will only request necessary

or missing information from the patient rather than conducting a full review from scratch. The patient will receive a waiver with the same validity period as their household member.

The HA is gradually enhancing its electronic system “Medical Fee Assistance Domain” (the domain) to support medical fee waiver applications. Patients can now upload required documents for financial assessment through the domain, receive push notifications about key application status, and check application details. Starting from the second quarter of 2026, patients will also be able to submit applications through the domain.

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