

Tuesday, 17 March 2026

**Hospital Authority reviews medical fee waiver cases
and safeguards limited public healthcare resources**

The Hospital Authority (HA) spokesperson stated today (March 17) that the HA is reviewing approved medical fee waiver cases in accordance with the established mechanism to ensure that limited public resources are being properly utilised.

Since the implementation of the public healthcare fees and charges reform on January 1 this year, up to March 13, the HA has approved a total of nearly 200 000 medical fee waiver applications, comprising 107 348 cases where waiver certificates have been issued following completed assessments, and 92 491 conditional waiver cases. Applicants granted conditional waivers are required to submit relevant supporting documents within three months for review in order to demonstrate genuine financial hardship. To date, approximately 24 000 conditional waiver cases have completed the document submission process. During the review process, the HA has identified over 640 applications that do not meet the eligibility criteria, the majority of which involve income or assets exceeding the prescribed limits.

The HA spokesperson said, "One case involved a three-person household which, at the time of application, reported having no income and assets of only \$430 000, and was subsequently granted a conditional full fee waiver. Upon review of the submitted supporting documents, it was confirmed that certain assets had not been declared, and the household's actual assets exceeded \$860 000, surpassing the applicable asset limit of \$682 000 for that case. The HA has revoked the conditional waiver granted to the patient and has required the applicant to settle all applicable medical fees."

The spokesperson also cited another case. "The case involved a married couple, where the patient was a recipient of the Old Age Living Allowance below the age of 75, and the spouse was in full-time employment. Under the simplified application procedures for the Old Age Living Allowance introduced by the reform, the spouse was not required to submit any proof of income. However, upon review, the assessment team confirmed that the household possessed assets exceeding \$630 000, which surpassed the asset limit of \$562 000 under the medical fee waiver scheme, rendering the application ineligible for a waiver."

The HA emphasised that following the public healthcare fees and charges reform, the government subsidy rate remains around 95%. Under the principle of "copayment by those who can afford and copayment by those with mild conditions", the medical fee copayment rate is around 5%. The medical fee waiver mechanism was established to channel additional public resources to further assist patients with genuine financial difficulties, enabling those who are poor to be exempted from payment. As such, the HA must carefully scrutinise every application and require applicants to provide all relevant financial supporting documents, including accessible insurance savings or Hong

Kong Jockey Club betting account records, to ensure a fair and impartial review process and to direct appropriate assistance to patients with genuine needs.

The spokesperson added that the HA has always been diligent in safeguarding limited public healthcare resources, carefully reviewing every medical fee waiver application, and conducting sample checks on approved cases to ensure that fee waivers are directed to patients with genuine needs. Should any fraudulent element be identified during the review process, the HA will handle the matter seriously, require the applicant to settle all applicable medical fees, and refer the case to law enforcement authorities for follow-up.

Since the implementation of the public healthcare fees and charges reform, the HA has been adopting various measures to strengthen the protection of “poor, acute, serious and critical patients”, ensuring that no patient in need is denied necessary medical services due to financial reasons. One key measure is the optimisation of the medical fee waiver mechanism. After an assessment confirms that a patient faces financial hardship (or other non-financial circumstances), the patient may be granted a medical fee waiver of up to 18 months, significantly alleviating their financial burden and ensuring that no patient falls into poverty due to illness.

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