

Friday, 19 November 2021

Annual Operation Report of the Samaritan Fund

Members of the Hospital Authority (HA) Board discussed and endorsed the report on the overall operation of the Samaritan Fund (the Fund), and the audited financial statements of the Fund for the year ended 31 March 2021 at the Administrative and Operational Meeting (Thursday, 18 November 2021).

Established in 1950, the Fund is currently administered by HA. The objective of the Fund is to provide financial assistance to needy patients who fulfill the specified clinical criteria and pass the means test to meet expenses for designated Privately Purchased Medical Items (PPMI) or new technologies required in the course of medical treatment which are not covered by the standard fees and charges in public hospitals and clinics.

Having regard to changes in clinical protocols and scientific evidence, HA regularly reviews the Fund's coverage under the established mechanism. To provide more timely support to needy patients, HA has increased the frequency of the prioritisation exercise for including self-financed drugs in the safety net from once to twice a year since 2018. In 2020/21, 8 new drugs, 2 new indications, 1 non-drug item and 1 drug repositioned from Community Care Fund "Subsidy for Eligible Patients to Purchase Ultra-expensive Drugs (Including Those for Treating Uncommon Disorders)" Programme were introduced to the coverage of the Fund. In 2021/22 (up to end September 2021), the Fund further expanded its coverage by introducing 5 new drugs and 2 new indications. With the extension of its coverage, the Fund supports 54 self-financed drugs and 8 categories of non-drug items.

The total number of approved applications for the year 2020/21 is 9,334, approved applications for drugs and non-drug items were 4,416 and 4,918 respectively. The expenditure of the Fund in 2020/21 is \$843.7 million, of which expenditure on drug and non-drug items are \$577.6 million and \$266.1 million respectively.

The 2021/22 projected expenditure is \$1,070.4 million (\$790.7 million and \$279.7 million for drugs and non-drug items respectively). The increase in expenditure is mainly due to the rising demand attributable to the ageing population; as well as the introduction of more new drugs and non-drug items into the Fund.

The Director of Audit has given an unqualified audit opinion on the 2020/21 financial statements of the Fund. Both income and expenditure of the Fund for 2020/21 amounted to \$843.7 million (2019/20: \$677.2 million). Major sources of income are Government grants, reimbursement from Social Welfare Department and donations. Special thanks to members of the community and the Government who have rendered unreserved support to the Fund. HA will make continuous effort in communicating with patient groups to collate their views on the Fund so as to benefit more needy patients.