



The Hong Kong Association of the Pharmaceutical Industry
香港科研製藥聯會

3 June 2005

Dr. Allen Cheung
Director (Professional Services and Operations)
Hospital Authority
5/F., Hospital Authority,
147B Argyle Street,
Kowloon

Dear Dr. Cheung,

On behalf of the board of directors and the members of the HKAPI, I would like to express our thanks and appreciation for a productive discussion with you on the industry's position paper on the Standard Drug Formulary (SDF) on 25th May 2005.

As a partner aligned towards the betterment of healthcare in Hong Kong, we believe it is important to continue to work together to develop robust and sustainable systems and programs that are “win-win-win” for the government, the industry, and – most importantly – the patients.

As we progress towards this goal, I would like to summarize key points of our discussion.

First, let us build on the important points that we have aligned with respect to the ‘Self-Finance-Item’ (SFI) program:

1. We agree with your comment that HA doctors have limited time to discuss details of prescriptions with patients.
 - a. We support your idea of providing patients with information packs or VCDs further explaining their disease and prescriptions. We see this as an immediate project we can begin working on together.
 - b. We have already committed to set-up an educational fund to support the HA endorsed initiative of the Drug Education Resource Center (DERC) to provide independent drug information to patients.
2. We support your point to encourage the private insurance industry to develop packages that cover expensive treatments, especially cancer.
3. Set-up a task force on SFI logistics is welcome. In particular, to provide independent guidance to patients about community dispensaries and pharmacists – such as who/where/how to approach. In addition, given problems with counterfeits and substandard practices, it is important to educate patients on independent appraisals, such as the “Ⓢ” mark.

2.

Aside from the above cooperative points, we would also like to encourage continued dialogue on other points:

1. We are concerned that merely omitting the term 'standard' in the SDF (renaming to HA Drug Formulary) will not address the fundamental issue which has been highlighted in the Legco paper on SDF, and by the Permanent Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food Ms. Carrie Yau (during a recent South China Morning Post symposium on Healthcare Funding Reform). That is, there is a need to standardize the differences in treatment protocols by the different clusters. In fact, this will also avoid possible confusion and resentment by patients due to differing standards of care.
2. We believe that the current role of the cluster Drug Therapeutic Committees (DTC) needs to be refocused in light of the SDF. That is, the role of the HA Drug Advisory Committee (DAC) should be sufficient to set drug treatment access and protocols; while the DTC should perhaps refocus on ensuring rational and proper use of drugs in the context of the DAC approval, and/or triggering DAC to re-review approved drugs due to new evidence or indications.
3. We believe that the SDF drug inclusion criteria should be open and transparent. At the very least, to have a clear and stated rationale on drugs not included.

We hope we can establish a regular point of contact and dialogue to discuss these points and other opportunities moving forward.

To conclude, we are pleased to have had this initial opportunity to discuss with you as a partner, especially as the Hospital Authority - and healthcare in Hong Kong - is undergoing a transition. At the end of the day, both our goals converge towards providing sustainable and world-class healthcare solutions to patients in Hong Kong.

I will contact you in the next few days to gather your thoughts on next steps. Please feel free to contact me before hand. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Sabrina Chan
Executive Director