

CCF to subsidise HA patients in financial difficulty to use self-financed cancer drugs
(with photo)

The following is issued on behalf of the Community Care Fund Secretariat:

The Hospital Authority (HA) today (July 27) announced the details of the First Phase Programme of the Community Care Fund (CCF) Medical Assistance Programmes. From August 1, 2011, eligible patients can apply for financial assistance to use self-financed cancer drugs under the programme, which is expected to benefit 1,000 patients in the first year.

The Chairman of the Medical Sub-committee of the CCF and Chairman of HA, Mr Anthony Wu, officiated at a launch ceremony and press briefing on the programme today. He said, "The main objective of the CCF is to provide assistance to people facing economic difficulties, in particular those who fall outside the social safety net or those within the net but have special circumstances that are not covered.

"Having regard to the views from various sectors, two CCF Medical Assistance Programmes - the First Phase Programme and the Second Phase Programme - have been endorsed by the Steering Committee on the CCF after careful consideration. Both programmes are targeted at subsidising HA patients who have financial difficulties to use self-financed drugs."

The First Phase Programme will subsidise HA patients to use six specified self-financed cancer drugs that have not yet been brought into the Samaritan Fund (SF) safety net for seven specific cancer diseases. These are lung cancer, leukemia, colorectal cancer, renal cell carcinoma, gastrointestinal tumour, breast cancer and ovarian cancer.

"Drugs subsidised by the First Phase Programme are those that have been rapidly accumulating medical scientific evidence and with relatively high efficacy, though they are expensive. Although other related drugs and treatment are provided at HA's standard fees and charges, many patients may still choose to use these drugs at their own expense. The CCF will provide subsidy to eligible patients to facilitate their early access to these drugs," Mr Wu said.

To launch the First Phase Programme as early as possible, applications will be processed using the financial assessment mechanism of the existing SF operations

with which patients, doctors and medical social workers are familiar, i.e. patients have to pass the means test conducted by medical social workers. In addition, patients are also required to fulfill specified clinical criteria. Patients in need can consult doctors or medical social workers for more details about the application procedure.

The Second Phase Programme will be rolled out in the first quarter of 2012 and will subsidise HA patients who marginally fall outside the SF safety net for use of SF subsidised drugs. Details will be announced when finalised.

The Steering Committee on the CCF announced earlier that 10 assistance programmes would be launched in 2011-12, and funds had also been set aside for three other programmes whose implementation details are being formulated.

Among them, two assistance programmes to help needy students, namely the lunch subsidy and the school-based fund to subsidise students in joining learning activities outside Hong Kong, were launched in June. The other assistance programmes will be rolled out in phases to benefit more groups.

For details on the medical assistance programme, please visit the CCF website (www.communitycarefund.hk) or the HA website (www.ha.org.hk).

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