

PolyU CPCE Health Conference 2017 Gathers International Experts to Discuss Healthcare Delivery and Financing Reform Issues

School of Professional Education and Executive Development (SPEED) and Hong Kong Community College (HKCC), the educational units of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU)-affiliated College of Professional and Continuing Education (CPCE) held the CPCE Health Conference 2017 (<http://healthconf2017.cpce-polyu.edu.hk>) on PolyU Hung Hom Bay Campus on 16 January 2017.

With the support and sponsorship from 19 organisations in the healthcare and tertiary education sectors, the Conference assembled over 50 academics and experts from Australia, Japan, the United Kingdom, Canada, the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Thailand to present their research papers. Prof. Sophia Chan, JP, the Under Secretary for Food and Health of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), officiated at the opening ceremony, together with Prof. Peter P. Yuen, Dean of PolyU CPCE.

Generating dialogue, insights and future collaboration on various healthcare service delivery, financing reform, and education and training issues were the main objectives of the Conference on “Healthcare Delivery And Financing Reform: Implications for Business, Service Providers and Patients”. The Conference attracted a packed audience of over 250 healthcare professionals, academics and students. Experts and academics from the Asia Pacific region were invited to deliver speeches during the Plenary Sessions.



The officiating guests, Prof. Sophia Chan (4th from left), JP, the Under Secretary for Food and Health of the HKSAR Government, Prof. Peter P. Yuen (3rd from left), Dean of PolyU CPCE, were joined by the Plenary Session Speakers, Prof. David Briggs (4th from right), Prof. Toshihiko Hasegawa (2nd from right), Prof. Tomonori Hasegawa (right), Dr Phudit Tejatvaddhana (2nd from left), Prof. Rachel Lu (3rd from right), and Dr Vivienne Zhang (left), at the CPCE Health Conference 2017.



The officiating guest Prof. Sophia Chan, Under Secretary for Food and Health, congratulated on the successful hosting of the Healthcare Conference for the second year. Prof. Chan found the Conference “timely, important and meaningful” because it invited experts and academics from different regions to share their research findings with the participating representatives of the healthcare sector in Hong Kong. She pointed out that similar to other advanced economies, Hong Kong is facing the challenges of an ageing population, increasing healthcare costs with advances in medical technologies and growing expectations of the population. “Confronted by these challenges, the Hong Kong Government is committed to maintaining a balanced and sustainable development of the healthcare system,” said Prof. Chan, who added that the government would look for more ways to balance public and private healthcare sectors while expanding, renovating and building hospitals.



The officiating guests and plenary session speakers took a photo with the Organising Committee members and the representatives of the Co-Organisers, Sponsors and Associate Organisations of CPCE Health Conference 2017.

Prof. Peter P. Yuen, Dean of PolyU CPCE cum Conference Chair, delivered a speech on “The Lack of Progress in Health Systems Reform in Hong Kong: Reasons, Implications, and the Way Forward” in the plenary session. He said that Hong Kong has the longest life expectancy in the world, and has been ranked as the world’s most efficient health care system. He further pointed out that all local residents are eligible to receive highly subsidised care from public hospitals, and no Hong Kong person is denied of care because of financial reasons. He pointed out, however, that the Hong Kong healthcare and long term care systems appeared to be highly stretched, resulting in long waiting time for non-urgent medical conditions as well as for long term care services.

“As Hong Kong’s population ages because of low birth rates and increased life expectancy, the tax-paying working age population will decrease correspondingly, resulting in less tax revenue available to support the publicly-funded services. Currently, both the healthcare system and long term care system are supported largely by tax revenue which is likely to shrink significantly. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that the system is too acute-care and inpatient care oriented, which is not only expensive to run but also not in the best interest of the patients. A holistic approach, putting more resources into primary care, day care and home care is needed to address the cost-ineffectiveness of the healthcare and long term care systems,” said Prof. Yuen.

Prof. Yuen provided some pointers for the way forward. In light of the Hong Kong government’s fiscal reserves of over HK\$800 billion, he proposed that part of the reserves should be put aside for setting up a “Health Care Future Fund” to provide supplementary funding to the Hong Kong public health and long



term care services when tax revenue declines as a result of shrinking working population. The government should also improve the efficiency of Hospital Authority's current funding arrangement by adopting the "money follows the patients" model. In addition, Prof. Yuen proposed that a centralised "Health Authority" to be created to oversee primary healthcare, hospital services and long term care services. A timely public consultation should also be conducted to explore ways for developing alternative long term financing strategies.

Prof. Yuen said that healthcare programmes are offered by PolyU SPEED and PolyU HKCC to equip students with a diverse range of skills for different types of work in the healthcare sector. In the 2017/18 academic year, PolyU SPEED will introduce a new programme in health services management, the BA (Hons) in Business (Health Services Management), to meet the community manpower need of the healthcare sector. HKCC also offers Associate in Health Studies programme.

Dr Ben Fong, Senior Lecturer of PolyU SPEED cum the Chair of Organising Committee of the Conference, also shared that the BSc (Hons) in Applied Sciences (Health Studies) programme, with a concentration in general health subjects, was first introduced by PolyU SPEED in 2014. This programme has demonstrated great potential in shaping the work force in the health sector by filling the "unattended" gap of middle-level non-professional grade staff with undergraduates educated in health studies subjects. The programme focuses on the main areas of community health programmes, health policy, health insurance, long-term care services, etc. Graduates will enjoy bright career prospects, taking up employment opportunities in the Hospital Authority, private hospitals, non-government organisations, health education agencies, and pharmaceutical companies, etc.

Another guest speaker Prof. David Briggs, Adjunct Professor, College of Health Systems Management, Naresuan University of Thailand, Editor, Asia Pacific Journal of Health Management, and President, Society for Health Administration Programs in Education, presented a theme of "Health Reform: Critical Challenges for Health Systems Management - Australian Perspectives". He shared that the current challenges for the Australian health system include managing downward fiscal pressure, increasing capacity and demand for services, ensuring the optimal allocation of resources for delivering a right mix of care to the elderly, as well as continually raising concerns for improved quality and safety of care. He also pointed out the emerging themes and approaches to health reform.

Two Japanese academics examined the process, experience and perspective of the public healthcare reform in Japan in the past few decades. Prof. Toshihiko Hasegawa, President, Future Health Research Institute, delivered a speech on "Historical Overview of Health Sector Reform of Japan and its Future Perspective" by mainly reviewing the history of healthcare reform in Japan and elaborating his premise in the future development of healthcare reform. He projected that Hong Kong, Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, and some other Asian countries will follow the demographic drift towards an ageing population only 10 to 20 years after Japan. There is only half century left for these regions to build an entirely new healthcare system, through learning from each other.

Meanwhile, Prof. Tomonori Hasegawa, Professor and Chair, Division of Health Policy and Health Service Research Department of Social Medicine, Toho University School of Medicine of Japan, delivered a speech on "Health Sector Reform – Japan's Experience" by analysing how the community-based integrated healthcare system proposed by the government of Shinzo Abe influenced the development of the healthcare structure in Japan. He opined that reform of the whole society would be needed to deal with ageing-related healthcare problems and make the nation and its social systems sustainable.



Dr Phudit Tejavivaddhana, Assistant to the President, Comprehensive Operations, Naresuan University, and Assistant Professor, College of Health Systems Management, Naresuan University, delivered a speech on “Health Reform: Perspectives from the Thai Experience”. He said that universal health insurance has already been achieved in Thailand. Thailand and other most developed countries are now facing similar challenges: an ageing and increasingly urban population lead to adult mortality and risk factors of upper-middle income groups and the need to modify institutional structures to reflect these changing circumstances. Thailand modeled its healthcare system reform after World Health Organization’s District Health Systems (DHS). The presentation of Dr Tejavivaddhana discussed how the current initiatives reform the Thai health system at the district level by improving quality of primary care services and strengthening governance and management capacity of district health boards in order to embrace the original concept of DHS development.

Universal Health Coverage is being embraced globally as an important goal to improve population health. In 2015, Taiwan National Health Insurance (NHI) celebrated its 20th anniversary since its inauguration in 1995. The presentation on “Beyond a 20-Year Journey of Universal Health Coverage in Taiwan: Challenges Ahead” by Prof. Rachel Lu, Professor, Graduate Institute of Business and Management and Department of Health Care Management of the College of Management, Chang Gung University, showcased the strategic development, recent financing reform and challenges ahead of NHI scheme in Taiwan, in terms of physician supply and long-term care.

Since the launch of its healthcare reform in 2009, China has made significant progress in establishing a basic health insurance system covering both urban and rural residents. According to Dr Vivienne Zhang, Assistant Professor, Department of Health Policy and Management, Sun Yat-sen University, due to its complexity and systematic nature, healthcare system reform in China is faced with many challenges. In her presentation of “Health Care System in China and Recent Reform Initiatives”, she stated that the reform needs to go further in promoting comprehensive reform of health insurance, medical services delivery, and integration of basic health insurance schemes.

As part of the Conference, a series of five parallel sessions, including “Healthcare Reform”, “Financing and Management”, “Healthcare Delivery”, “Education and Training”, and “Community-based Programmes”, were held to cover 35 topics on healthcare service and financing reform.

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