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# A break for doctors of Pokoi at last

**MEDICAL** and Health Department has finally decided to help solve the problem of doctor shortage at Pokoi hospital in Yuenlong.

Following repeated requests for help from members of the board of directors of the hospital, the department decided to arrange an end-of-contract gratuity for Pokoi doctors.

The New Territories regional director of the department Patrick Wong said yesterday the gratuity would amount to 25 per cent of the doctors' salary at the end of their two-and-a-half-year contract period.

Dr Wong said information of overseas doctors who were applying to come to Hongkong has also been passed to the hospital.

Members of the hospital's board of directors had attacked the government for refusing to help solve the problems of

Pokoi in the last two months.

However, the Medical and Health Department had insisted that the problems of the hospital were exaggerated.

The department earlier said it was not the policy of the department to recruit doctors for subvented hospitals like Pokoi.

Earlier last month two of the six doctors in Pokoi decided to resign and the doctor manpower weakened further.

Two weeks ago one of the Pokoi directors, Cheng Mui-tin, who is also an elected member of the Yuenlong District Board urged government to help with the problem.

He asked government to provide end-of-contract gratuities, rural allowances and housing allowances for Pokoi doctors.

Dr Wong said the department's decision to help Pokoi is in line with its policy of giving subsidies to all deficiency grant hospitals whenever they do not have sufficient funds.

He said while gratuity would be given to Pokoi doctors the department would not give housing allowances to those who do not want to stay in staff quarters provided by Pokoi.

"We don't want to waste tax payers' money by leaving our quarters unoccupied," he said. "Housing allowances would only be considered if we do not have quarters for the doctors."

He also said the rural allowances scheme proposed by Mr Cheng would involve other government departments and any decision rested with the government.

"Other civil servants working in the New Territories might demand allowances as well if a rural allowances scheme is implemented," he said.

Dr Wong said more long-term development of the hospital was now underway and the medical facilities of Pokoi would increase when the development works are completed.

Superintendent of Pokoi hospital, Wong Wai-kwong, said the doctors at Pokoi were delighted to hear the news about the end-contract gratuities.

"It would certainly attract doctors to stay with the hospital," he said.

Mr Cheng Mui-tin also said he was delighted that the government had finally decided to do something to improve conditions in the hospital.