

S.C.M.P.

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\$4.5m study of hospitals

The Government yesterday commissioned a consultancy study costing nearly \$4.5 million to find ways of improving hospitals.

The review will look into the organisation and internal administration of Government and subvented hospitals.

Secretary for Health and Welfare, Mr John Chambers, said the main purpose of the review was to consider what changes were needed to enable Government to cope with continuing expansion in the years ahead.

After signing a nine-month consultancy agreement with an Australian firm, he said the consultants would look into aspects of hospital administration, cost-control and better allocation of existing resources.

They would also look into the possibility of introducing a new structure of charges that took into account both services and patients' ability to pay. Ideas included enlisting the help of the private sector and the development of a medical insurance.

Mr Chambers said the study did not necessarily imply that there were faults in the present system, but that the Government reckoned there was room for improvement.

The consultant's report, when finished in nine months, will be handed over to the Executive Council where the financial implications of the recommendations will be considered.

"It is impossible to say what will be changed as a result (of the study) at the moment," Mr Chambers said.

He said there would be no hold-up in schemes for the expansion of medical services

during the period of the review.

"We're not stopping the schemes during the review," he said.

He said there had never been a proper review of medical services in Hongkong's hospitals, and the study would help the Government to see if a different system was more appropriate.

The Australian consultancy, the W.D. Scott and Co Pty Ltd, had been appointed so that outsiders could look at the system, Mr Chambers said.

The consultants can give advice on problems in Hongkong's hospital which were not unique, based on their experience in other parts of the world, he stated.

Mobilisation of local medical experts for the study would mean that they would have to be pulled out from their present jobs, he said.

The consultants will work under the guidance of a nine-member steering committee, chaired by Mr Chambers, which includes two Unofficial Legislative Councillors — Dr Harry Fang and Dr Henrietta Ip.

The consultants will meet people from more than 30 different organisations, ranging from the teaching hospitals right through to the private practitioners, said Dr Richard Freyer, head of the W.D. Scott's Health Management Services.

Dr Freyer said the consultants will visit five to six subvented hospitals and most regional hospitals.

The project leader and organisation consultant of the team, Mr Alec Baker, will be responsible on a full-time basis for the management of the project in Hongkong.

He will be supported by nine other consultants offering specialist advice in areas such as health care costs, nursing and health insurance.