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90pc say no to new hospital package

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MORE than 90 per cent of government doctors and dentists will reject the new Hospital Authority's pay package, a survey has shown.

"This clearly demonstrates the lack of attraction of the package, as well as unfair bridging arrangements proposed by the Government," the chairman of the Government Doctors' Association, Dr Ho Siu-wei, said yesterday.

Of 471 respondents to the association's survey, only 32 doctors said they would choose the new package, while all 14 dental officers who responded said they would reject the terms.

There are 1,700 government doctors and about 100 dental officers.

While the survey did not ask doctors their reasons, Dr Ho believed only those concerned with short-term cash benefits would choose to work under the authority.

"It would not affect them, as they know they will get less of a pension on retirement," he said.

The survey found a higher proportion of consultants and senior medical officers would choose to transfer compared with junior doctors.

It found that around 15 per cent of the 47 consultants and 132 senior medical officers would join the Hospital Authority, compared with just 1½ per cent of medical officers.

Dr Ho warned that the authority would not be able to function with mixed staff since civil servants must abide by the civil code of practice.

"Keeping staff employed under civil service terms within the authority would defeat the original purpose

of separating the medical system from the government structure," he added.

But the Secretary for Health and Welfare, Mrs Elizabeth Wong Chien Chien disputed the claim.

"So long as the regulations and rules do not conflict with each other and so long as the Hospital Authority is able to carry out its functions under the law, then I would think that's not going to be an obstacle in itself," she said.

The doctors' association will meet Mrs Wong today to present its case and warn the administration against the hasty passage of the Hospital Authority Bill in July.

It has also extended an invitation to Mrs Wong and officials of the Civil Service Branch, Finance Branch, the Provisional Hospital Authority, Hospital Services' Department and the Department of Health to attend a doctor's forum on the Hospital Authority on Tuesday.

The doctors want the Government to provide solid figures to back its claims that the proposed and present pay packages are comparable.

Dr Ho said a government doctor in his third year of service at present was eligible for a housing allowance of \$10,980, but would only get \$3,770 under the new pay package.

On pension funds, the association says a medical officer would suffer a loss of between 25 and 39 per cent on retirement compared with what that person could expect under civil service terms.

"The Government is to be held accountable if the introduction of the Hospital Authority demoralises the staff instead of bringing improvements to the service," Dr Ho said.