

Academics warning on doctors' pay

By FIONA CHAN

MEDICAL research and training would suffer badly unless pay for university doctors was increased, four top academics claimed yesterday.

The four professors from the University of Hongkong, including Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Professor Rosie Young Tse-tse, warned the Government unless their colleagues' pay was given parity with staff at the Hospital Authority (HA) the standard of local health care would suffer.

Medical achievements pioneered by university doctors including organ transplants and breakthroughs in genetic research showed the importance of their work, the professors claimed.

Representatives of the University Medical Doctors' Association will have their second meeting with the Secretary for Education and Manpower, Mr John Chan Cho-chak, next week before a deadline for industrial action scheduled for August 1.

They are angry at the difference in the remuneration

package offered by the university and HA.

The university doctors say an independent study shows the difference in payment between the comparable posts of a senior medical officer, and a top medical lecturer was \$600,000 per year.

Professor Young said the "pillar" of the teaching staff would resign if the deadlock could not be resolved.

"I don't think there will be mass resignation. But those of good quality and those we most need will resign," she said.

And it would lower the standard of medical training in Hongkong, she added.

Head of Department of Surgery, Professor John Wong said the vacancies would be filled by expatriates who were of the same quality but not commitment. The 10 latest applications for a lecturer post were all from overseas.

Professor Wong warned: "A large number of people are resigning. They are people who will eventually take our places. We will lose people in the middle management."

Head of the Department

of Medicine at the University of Hongkong, Professor Chan Tai-kwong, said the difference in the pay packages had hit the medics' morale and he expected university doctors would resign if they did not get a better offer.

He did not expect doctors to go on strike as it would harm the patients but they would simply look for other jobs.

"We are not only talking about 200 doctors. We are talking about the best of the profession in public hospitals," Professor Chan said.

Yesterday, he also revealed the major achievements of the department in genetics studies, bone marrow transplant and cardiology. He said the University and Polytechnic Grant Committee would continue its exercise on surveying the working hours of university doctors in October.

Head of the department of paediatrics, Professor Yeung Chap-yung, said four vacancies in the department had yet to be filled and five very good applicants in latest recruitment exercises went to HA because of better pay.