

Foreword

A comparative study of healthcare systems in the Western world would provide us with some insights on the sustainability of healthcare systems. The U.S. is more advanced than other countries in the science and technologies relating to medicine, and has higher healthcare expenditures but not necessarily good health outcomes, as reflected by statistics on life expectancy, premature death, and the prevalence of chronic illnesses. Meanwhile, the UK/Canada/European countries spend less on health and have better health outcomes. One of the key factors in the relatively poor health outcomes in the U.S. is the lack of a well-structured primary healthcare delivery system to effectively manage the increasing burden from non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Primary healthcare is about providing whole person and comprehensive and coordinated care, which is particularly important for the management of co-morbidities and the practice of preventive care, the core elements of the management of NCDs.

Hong Kong has gone through series of healthcare reforms arising from the “Scott Report”, the “Health for All, The Way Ahead: Report of the Working Party on Primary Health Care” issued in 1990, and on through to the recent “Primary Healthcare Blueprint”. Certain milestones were achieved, but there is still a long way to go to attain a sustainable healthcare system. The key is to change the mindset on healthcare delivery and the infrastructure of the existing system. What is required is to re-orient the focus to a patient-centred approach to resolve patients’ health conditions and related issues, rather than treating individual

diseases in a silo. The focus should be on the effective coordination of patient care so that patients receive appropriate and timely care by the most appropriate health professionals at the right time and right place.

We need to research the science of implementation with a paradigm shift in the service model. I would like to congratulate Dr Ben Y. F. Fong and Professor Anthony Y. H. Fung in leading the publication of this book with contributions by distinguished professionals to unfold the science of how to build a sustainable healthcare system for Hong Kong. The book includes a unique section containing a systematic review of Hong Kong's healthcare system to consider the social model of care, evaluation of the effectiveness of primary healthcare initiatives, and manpower issues. The book includes a discussion on the impact of the public health crisis posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and how to move forward in the post-COVID era. Caring services are the cornerstone of a sustainable healthcare system that fills important gaps in health needs, but they are not always given a strong emphasis. This book highlights how to establish sustainable and caring services.

This book will enlighten us on the areas that we need to focus on to strengthen community-based care to enable the healthcare system to become more sustainable. The contents of the book shed light on future developments. It is time to put evidence into practice. Otherwise, we will continue to talk for another four decades.

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