



"Bruce Vaughan"

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To <beStrong@fhb.gov.hk>

cc

bcc

Subject Consultation on Health Care Reform

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"Bruce Vaughan"

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Lifelong Investment in Health .

In answer to the consultation on Health Care Reform, Lifelong Investment in Health, I would like to make the following points..

It is time that we as a society had a complete re-think about our health care, not just about the cost and how it should be paid, but as a whole. At present the entire system is dependent almost exclusively on the Medical model, based on surgery, pharmaceuticals and radiation. These are the only choices the vast majority of Hong Kong's population has. It is like having a major chain of restaurants, supported by the government and insurance companies that only serve chicken, whilst all other restaurants are located in hard-to-get-at places with many obstacles in the way.

The emphasis must change from **disease management to health maintenance and restoration**. Wherever possible more natural and less invasive approaches should be used: there is ample evidence that natural methods are, in many cases, as good as and often better than the pharmaceutical approach and more importantly, less invasive. In countries free from wars, genocide and starvation one of the leading causes of death is properly prescribed drugs. The JAMA reports that 10,000 people die each year from illegal drugs, whilst 106,000 people die from properly prescribed drugs and 2 million people suffer serious side effects. These figures are supported by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC. Similar reports have come from Europe, Australia and New Zealand.

Health care costs have reached staggering heights because of the cost of drugs and the ever increasing sophistication of diagnostic equipment — used often to satisfy the doctor's curiosity or to protect him/her from lawsuits — it also costs society in deaths, disability and loss of man-hours from the workplace.

I do not belittle the tremendous importance of Western Medicine; my purpose here is to suggest a paradigm shift in health care, away from dependence on and control by one profession or set of protocols, towards a more integrated system that encompasses the best of natural healing with the best of orthodox medicine. In order to achieve this there has to be a major change in the society's thinking, which can only happen if:

1. If the policy departments in the Health Department and the Hospital Administration were prepared to change their structure to include people from the other professions and/or members of the public who were not of a purely medical mindset.
2. If and when alternative health professions are a part of the health care teams in HA clinics and hospitals there has to be a new breed of gatekeeper. These gatekeepers or navigators would be sufficiently knowledgeable about all the professions and be able to recognize their merit, without favour or bias, so that they can direct patients through the labyrinth of treatment options appropriately. They would not treat the patient. Obviously emergency patients would bypass this step

unless thought appropriate by ER.

Such a scheme, once implemented, would:

- Reduce our dependence on pharmaceuticals.
- Reduce need for surgery.
- Reduce hospital visits/stays.
- Shorten hospital stays
- Reduce lost man-hours.
- Reduce overall cost of health care.

Such a radical change could not happen over-night. If the policy makers were open to such change, then a series of pilot schemes could be initiated to test effectiveness of the health professions now available. There must also be a more intense community wide education programme on how to obtain and maintain health rather than only on how to avoid sickness. The health of the community concerns all of us and our health care system must be our responsibility. It should not be controlled and monopolized by one profession. The Hong Kong public deserves an open and unbiased, publicly subsidized and truly integrated health care system.

Dr Bruce Vaughan DC
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