

Message from the Permanent Secretary for Food and Health (Health)



I am delighted to welcome our distinguished speakers and all participants to the Health Research Symposium 2021.

The Food and Health Bureau (the Bureau) is dedicated to creating and sustaining a healthy Hong Kong. The results obtained from our continuing support to cutting-edge health and medical research play an important role in informing our health policies.

In 2011, the Health and Medical Research Fund (HMRF) was established with an initial commitment of \$1,415 million by consolidating the Health and Health Services Research Fund and the Research Fund for the Control of Infectious Diseases. The Bureau has further increased its funding support in 2016 and again in 2021, while incorporating the functions of the Health Care and Promotion Fund under the HMRF. The funding commitment now stands at a total of \$4,223 million.

To date, the HMRF has supported nearly 2,000 investigator-initiated research projects, 333 health promotion projects, 30 commissioned programmes, as well as 44 research fellowship awards. These projects cover a wide range of topics including control of infectious diseases and management and prevention of major non-communicable diseases (such as mental health, cardiovascular illnesses, cerebrovascular diseases, cancers and diabetes), research and health promotion activities on modifiable lifestyle factors (including tobacco control, use of alcohol, injury prevention, healthy diet and physical activity), health services, elderly care, Chinese medicine, and many others.

The HMRF also commissioned research in key areas to fill knowledge gaps, inform health policy and address public health threats. Undoubtedly, the most significant global health threat in recent years has been the COVID-19 pandemic, and the HMRF has commissioned research programmes to generate important new knowledge on this disease, including its causes, diagnosis, treatment and prevention. These research projects are made possible through the Bureau's commitment over many years in supporting research on emerging and re-emerging infections. This support stands us in good stead when it comes to addressing other public health threats like avian influenza, swine influenza and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome. Hong Kong is now one of the few places in the world where COVID-19 is under control.

Research findings of HMRF-funded projects have contributed to promote clinical excellence, enhance health services and inform health policies. As part of the Government's strategy of developing Hong Kong into a biotechnology and biopharmaceutical hub, two Phase 1 Clinical Trials Centres have been supported to conduct safety, pharmacology and efficacy of various treatments for a range of cancers since 2014. And in the strengthening of tobacco control policy towards a smoke-free Hong Kong, an evaluation of various tobacco control policies is ongoing and the results are expected to further inform policy in this area. Following the first comprehensive Hong Kong Mental Morbidity Survey on the prevalence, risk factors and health service utilisation for common mental disorders of adults in 2010, the HMRF has commissioned a wider series of mental health surveys covering young children, youth, adults and elderly, which are still underway. In September 2021, the Breast Cancer Screening Pilot Programme was launched taking into consideration the research findings of a recently completed HMRF-commissioned study on the risk of breast cancer in Hong Kong.

With the Government's continuing and unfailing support, I very much hope our research community will continue to excel and contribute to the health and well-being of our society.

The Health Research Symposium this year will again showcase the rich knowledge generated by researchers funded by the HMRF. I wish all participants an insightful experience at this Symposium.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Thomas Chan'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Mr. Thomas Chan, JP

Permanent Secretary for Food and Health (Health) of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region