

The vital role of doctors in shaping health and community in Hong Kong: a call for nomination of interviewees

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The medical profession in Hong Kong serves as the cornerstone of the local healthcare system, playing a pivotal role in establishing the city as one of the healthiest places in the world.¹ Through its commitment to delivering high standards of care, maintaining advanced medical infrastructure, and cultivating highly skilled professionals, the Hong Kong medical profession has substantially contributed to the overall well-being and longevity of the population.² Hong Kong's healthcare system operates on a dual-track model, comprising both public and private sectors, which work together to provide comprehensive medical services to its population of over 7.5 million people.^{3,4} Doctors in Hong Kong play an essential role in maintaining the health and well-being of the community. Specialising in various fields, they provide high-quality care across different departments and collaborate to ensure the overall health of Hong Kong's population.¹ Moreover, their responsibilities extend far beyond the confines of hospitals and clinics. Hong Kong doctors are increasingly recognised for their unique contributions to community health, health education, and policy reform.^{1,2} They explore innovative approaches to address emerging health challenges, advocate for equitable healthcare policies, and engage in public health initiatives to promote preventive care and wellness.⁵ They serve to bridge the gap between clinical practice and community needs, fostering the creation of a healthier society.

There is a wide range of specialists in hospitals and clinics, each addressing specific health needs and providing expert care.⁶ Doctors manage a variety of tasks in these settings, from diagnosing illness and prescribing medication to performing surgeries and providing emergency treatment.⁷ They work closely with multidisciplinary teams to ensure comprehensive and well-coordinated care for all patients. Doctors must navigate the complexities of clinical environments, managing not only their

own responsibilities but also undertaking tasks that others cannot. This includes making critical medical decisions, interpreting complex diagnostic data, and collaborating with the entire team to ensure successful patient outcomes. Moreover, they follow evidence-based treatment protocols to deliver safe and effective care, while remaining responsive to patient progress and adjusting treatment accordingly. Beyond addressing physical health and pain management, doctors also play a crucial role in supporting the emotional and psychological well-being of their patients.

Various public health education initiatives have been developed by doctors in Hong Kong. Dr Victor Yeung, a highly respected urologist, launched a community service initiative named '寸草心' in 2008 to support community health.⁸ By organising gatherings for single older adults during major festivals, Dr Yeung not only provides emotional support and social engagement but also creates opportunities to promote health awareness among this vulnerable population.⁸ These events, which attract around 200 attendees each, serve as a platform to address critical health issues faced by older adults, such as mental health, preventive care, and healthy ageing.⁸ Dr Jason Cheuk-sing Yam, another community leader, has also developed impactful public health education initiatives, particularly in the field of paediatric eye care.⁹ Through the CUHK Jockey Club Myopia Prevention Programme, he has organised over 400 health talks targeting parents, teachers, and social workers. The Programme has successfully raised public awareness about children's eye disorders and the importance of early screening.⁹

Collaborating with local organisations and community centres is a common approach for doctors to maximise their medical influence. Dr Wing-yan Kwong, an emergency medicine specialist, has made substantial contributions to community

health through her close collaboration with various organisations in Hong Kong and abroad.¹⁰ Her work with the Hong Kong Red Cross enabled her to serve in regions with urgent health needs.¹⁰ In Africa, she focused on health education and promotion, teaching secondary school students about HIV/AIDS prevention and spearheading sponsorship programmes to fund education for underprivileged children.¹⁰ Dr Michael Kai-tsun To, a paediatric orthopaedic surgeon, has worked with HKU-Shenzhen Hospital to treat children with rare bone diseases across the border.¹¹ His collaboration with the hospital allowed him to provide complex surgical treatment for patients in mainland China, which has brought relief to numerous families caring for children with osteogenesis imperfecta.¹¹

Doctors have also played a vital role in reforming health policy in Hong Kong. For example, Dr Fei-chau Pang, the Commissioner for Primary Healthcare at the Health Bureau, has been dedicated to planning and promoting the accessibility and sustainability of the Hong Kong healthcare system.¹² Prior to 2004, he was actively involved in the development of Hong Kong's first batch of public Chinese Medicine clinics, helping to establish quality assurance mechanisms and information systems.¹² Key primary care initiatives, such as the Reference Frameworks and the Chronic Disease Co-Care Programme, have served as exemplary models of an evidence-based, community-oriented, collaborative approach to improving population health. Professor George Woo, regarded as the 'father of optometry' in Hong Kong, not only established the first optometry programme in the city but also made substantial contributions to healthcare policy.¹³ During his 10-year tenure on the Supplementary Medical Professions Council, he advocated for 17 legislative items and championed reforms such as compulsory continuing medical education.¹³

Furthermore, doctors in Hong Kong have actively engaged in advocacy for public health issues, drawing on their expertise to address critical health challenges in the community. Dr Gary Ng, a cancer patient himself, focuses on breaking down barriers to healthcare access for underprivileged populations, particularly individuals with disabilities.¹⁴ As Chairperson of the Hong Kong Federation of Handicapped Youth, he has been dedicated to creating a barrier-free society.¹⁴ Dr Wing-cheong Leung, the first accredited subspecialist in maternal-fetal medicine in Hong Kong, has been instrumental in advocating for universal prenatal screening programmes.¹⁵ His efforts to promote the importance of prenatal screening have ensured that all pregnant women, regardless of socioeconomic status, have access to essential prenatal care, thereby helping to reduce maternal and infant mortality rates.¹⁵ These outstanding achievements would not have been possible without his passion for serving the broader

community.

In this issue of the *Hong Kong Medical Journal*, our reporters had the privilege of interviewing Dr Cecilia Fan, an exceptional family physician known for her strong commitment to humanitarian work. Her leadership, alongside her team, in supporting the health of frontline rescue workers during the 2023 Türkiye–Syria earthquake has been truly inspiring. We invite you to read her sharing in the Healthcare for Society section.¹⁶

Doctors are essential to Hong Kong's healthcare system, serving as diagnosticians, treatment providers, educators, and patient advocates. In hospitals, they deliver emergency care, manage inpatient treatment, perform surgeries, and oversee critical care. In clinics, they focus on primary care, chronic disease management, and preventive health measures. Beyond clinical settings, doctors contribute to public health initiatives, research, and policy development, enhancing the healthcare system from multiple perspectives. Looking ahead, the involvement of doctors in community health is both promising and challenging. As healthcare systems evolve, doctors must address emerging issues such as ageing populations,¹⁷ mental health crises,¹⁸ and chronic diseases.¹⁹ The growing emphasis on preventive care requires doctors to expand their roles beyond traditional clinical practice.²⁰ Advances in technology will transform how doctors engage with patients and communities.²¹ By fostering collaboration between the public and private sectors and prioritising continuous education, doctors can lead the way in building a healthier Hong Kong. This collaboration encourages innovative solutions and equips medical professionals to meet the community's evolving health needs effectively.

We believe these healthcare professionals deserve further recognition, particularly to inspire our trainees who aspire to serve the community across various domains. With gratitude and appreciation, this editorial invites our fellows to nominate interviewees for future publication in our Healthcare for Society section by contacting the editorial office.

Author contributions

All authors contributed to the editorial, approved the final version for publication, and take responsibility for its accuracy and integrity.

Conflicts of interest

The authors have disclosed no conflicts of interest.

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