

Future Challenges in the Paediatric Cardiological Services in Hong Kong*Chau AKT**Department of Paediatric Cardiology, Queen Mary Hospital, Hong Kong*

Paediatric cardiology services started almost four decades ago in Hong Kong and for historical reasons, most of the tertiary services are concentrated at a single centre – the Grantham Hospital (GH) up to 2008 and currently at Queen Mary Hospital (QMH) when the service moved from GH to QMH in 2008. Regional hospitals are providing secondary services and perform a very small number of paediatric cardiac surgeries and therapeutic catheterisations. At present, we can largely keep up with the advances in the field and perform most of the complex paediatric cardiac surgeries, therapeutic catheterisations, electrophysiological studies and arrhythmia interventions. We are capable of providing extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) and ventricular assist device to patients in need and a paediatric heart transplant programme has been established for five years. Our outcomes in various aspects are benchmarked with international standards and relevant databases. We are a training centre for local and overseas paediatric cardiologists and an active research centre.

Yet, we are not complacent with the present achievements as we are facing a lot of challenges in the future. On clinical service, we have to keep up with advances in science and technology to introduce new and effective treatment modalities. The sub-specialisation in various fields of paediatric cardiology should be enhanced. We may need to further improve the current networking among tertiary and secondary services to transform it into a well-coordinated programme to provide seamless care to patients. An adult or grown-up congenital heart programme has to be established to meet the special needs of the increasing population of children with congenital heart disease growing up into adulthood.

For training and education, we need to be provided with adequate manpower to meet the service demand. Training should also be provided to the multiple disciplines that are involved in providing a good and safe paediatric cardiological service. There is as yet no specialty accreditation in Hong Kong. So we should aim at establishing an accreditation system and provide a structured training programme for our future paediatric cardiologists. Quality and safety is of utmost importance in such a high risk service. We should make continuous improvements in our system and to make sure that our framework continues to provide safe services with good quality. We are also on the way to establish a credentialing system for the high risk procedures.

The establishment of the Hong Kong Children's Hospital is a concrete policy with funding support from government and will give us a golden opportunity to further improve and develop our services for the benefits of children with heart disease in the millennium.