



To News Editor
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CUHK launches Department of Otorhinolaryngology, Head and Neck Surgery

Independent department will further strengthen training and research and expand clinical services

On 1 August 2007, The Chinese University of Hong Kong formally constituted an independent Department of Otorhinolaryngology, Head and Neck Surgery. This further strengthens its current leading position as a provider of medical and surgical treatment of the ear, nose, throat (ENT) and head and neck surgery, as well as clinical aspects of communicative disorders and training and research opportunities relevant to all these concerns.


Centred at the Prince of Wales Hospital in Sha Tin, the University's teaching hospital, the department is fully committed to delivering high quality patient services throughout the New Territories East and Kowloon East clusters of the Hospital Authority (HA), with whom it works closely. It will take care of the widest possible spectrum of disorders and diseases of the ear, nose, throat, head and neck, and it will develop three new subspecialties—facial plastic surgery, allergic conditions and paediatric ENT.

Its already well developed tradition of serving people with hearing disabilities will continue. In particular, it will extend its thoroughgoing cochlear implant programme, where hearing is restored by enabling the auditory nerve to receive electrical stimuli. This programme will also benefit from the department's comprehensive research into speech recognition and coding in Chinese and other Asian tone languages.

Chairing the department is Professor Andrew van Hasselt, who remains Chairman and Chief of Service, Department of Surgery at the University. He said, "The new arrangements will build on the very significant achievements since 1985 of the dedicated clinicians, teachers and researchers who have served the Division of Otorhinolaryngology within the University's Department of Surgery. This transition places us firmly in line with the international and Mainland China classification of ENT as an independent medical specialty and an established academic discipline."

"I am particularly excited by the fact that we are the first single unit in Hong Kong and Asia that is able to offer a full one-stop service for people with a great variety of hearing disorders," added Professor van Hasselt.

"Only a strong and varied multidisciplinary research programme such as we are proposing can support really comprehensive provision for so many people in need," he noted. "Our overarching aim takes us well beyond the successful treatment of illness to new insights into head, neck and throat cancers and the enhancement of human communication by means of the latest technologies and refinements in scientific knowledge."



The department will provide enriched clinical teaching for undergraduate medical students as well as strengthening professional training for interns and specialist provision for ENT trainees, and it will supervise postgraduate research and training. New programmes will include postgraduate courses in the field of ENT and communicative disorders.

The department's Professor Michael CF Tong said, "Our outstanding track record of research will continue, and we can now take even greater strides in head and neck cancer, including the nasopharyngeal cancers so highly prevalent in Hong Kong and elsewhere in Southern China. We shall also advance in such rapidly developing areas as surgical treatments for deafness in adults and children, minimal invasive ENT surgery, Asian facial plastic techniques and ENT problems in children."

Professor Tong continued, "Independence and an enhanced focus will also lead to more convenient and higher quality services, since we will be able to ensure the strictest adherence to the specific clinical and administrative standards demanded of our particular speciality. In addition, in an independent department, our strong empathy with our patients can be fully supported by providing them with the very best in information and education to help them deal with severe and long drawn out challenges."

Dr KB Fung, President of the Hong Kong College of Otorhinolaryngologists, expressed his support for the department, Hong Kong's first independent academic ENT department in a tertiary educational institution, confident that the College and the department would seek to co-operate actively on many fronts.

The newly constituted department expects to be working even more closely with charities such as the Hear Talk Foundation, a group of dedicated professionals comprising ENT specialists, audiologists, speech therapists and educators with a heart for improving the quality of life of underprivileged children and elderly people in Hong Kong and Mainland China who have hearing and speech communication disorders.