

The first community-based Breast Health Centre inaugurated to promote screening for breast cancer among women



[25 May - Hong Kong] A survey found that public awareness about early detection of breast cancer is inadequate and less than 20 % of local women receive regular breast screening. The Hong Kong Breast Cancer Foundation Breast Health Centre (BHC) inaugurated today will provide quality yet affordable breast screening services as well as fee waiver for 5,000 low-income women, filling the service gap existing between the public and private sectors. The establishment and the operation for the first three years is funded by The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust.

The Hong Kong Breast Cancer Foundation (HKBCF) encourages women aged over 40 to perform regular breast screening, including monthly self breast examination, clinical breast examination and mammography screening once every two years. Breast screening can detect breast cancer at early stages, and thus minimise the trauma and expenses brought by its treatment.

Mrs. Rita Fan, the Honorary President, HKBCF, shared at the opening ceremony today, “As a breast cancer survivor, I understand the hardship brought by breast cancer treatment and the importance of early detection as breast cancer is one of the cancers that can be detected through screening.” She hoped that SAR government will look into the needs and feasibility of implementing a territory-wide breast screening programme in Hong Kong”

Dr. Donald Li, the Steward of Hong Kong Jockey Club said, “The Trust cares about the public health. In the past decade, the HKJC donated more than HK\$2.2 billions on public health projects. We

21/F, Jupiter Tower, 9 Jupiter Street, North Point, Hong Kong 香港北角木星街 9 號永昇中心 21 樓

T: 3143 7333 F: 2578 2725 W: www.hkbcf.org



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are glad to support the establishment of the Breast Health Centre and be part of the efforts in promoting breast health awareness, early detection and support among women in the community."

Gap between awareness and practice

A HKBCF survey on women's awareness on breast screening indicated that women at high risk of developing breast cancer (40-59 of age) knew the screening methods but few took action to practise. Mammographic screening has been proven to be able to reduce breast cancer mortality rate and has been adopted in national breast screening programmes in many overseas countries. The survey results also showed that 80 per cent respondents were aware of the need for a mammogram. Yet less than 20 per cent performed it every two years. Reasons for not doing screening include: "feeling no need", "not referred by doctor" and "expensive". (see *table 1*)

Unmet need for affordable breast screening services

Dr. Polly Cheung, Founder of the HKBCF said "to help women build a habit of regular breast screening, apart from public education, the availability of an appropriate and accessible breast screening service is essential. The establishment of the Breast Health Centre is aimed to address the need."

Currently the women health centres of the Department of Health and some non-government medical institutions provide mammography screening service at an affordable price (under HK\$800) but the waiting time for an appointment could take several months, or even more than two years. Private medical facilities provide speedier service but the check-up may cost more than HK\$1,200 , which is unaffordable for grassroots women. Dr. Cheung also pointed out that most female body check-up packages available in the market did not include the breast screening comprehensive enough for good protection.

Education, Detection and Diagnosis

The Breast Health Centre is registered under the Medical Clinic Ordinance. It provides breast screening programme from instruction on self breast examination, to clinical breast examination and mammography screening. The service charge is on average 20 per cent lower than the services in the private sector (see *Table 2*).

The BHC also supports low income women on CSSA, and women receiving transport and disability allowance to receive free breast screening services, and diagnostic service where necessary. Fee waiver will be offered to low-income people whose income and asset do not exceed the limit.

Mrs. Eliza Fok, Chairman of the HKBCF said that the queuing time for diagnosis at public hospital could be long. The BHC provides breast cancer diagnostic service, hoping to speed up the process and help people in need receive timely treatment.

Mrs. Fok calls on women to make an appointment with the BHC; companies and community groups to promote breast health awareness through their network for the well being of the

community and encourages grass-root women to join the breast screening financial assistance programme. The BHC is also striving to promote breast health education, organizing breast health talks and workshops. The BHC produces a variety of breast health booklets and flyers for distribution. Interested parties are welcome to contact the BHC.

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Table 1: Awareness & practice of Breast Screening (age 40-59)

	Awareness	Practise Regularly *
Self Breast Exam	96%	37%
Clinical Breast Exam	96%	53%
Mammogram	77%	18%

**performing self breast exam once a month and receiving clinical breast exam and mammogram screening once every two years*

Table 2: Breast Health Centre Service Fees

Service	Fee
Self Breast Examination instruction+ Clinical Breast Examination	\$100
Self Breast Examination instruction + Clinical Breast Examination + Mammogram	\$750
Self Breast Examination instruction + clinical breast examination + Mammogram + Ultrasound imaging	\$1,200

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