

Message from the Secretary for Food and Health



I wish you all a warm welcome to the Health Research Symposium 2019.

The central theme of this year's Symposium is "*Genomics and Big Data in Health and Disease*". Genomics and big data are inter-related and cover nearly all aspects of medical and health research including communicable and non-communicable diseases. Research on genomics and use of health big data fully support the Government's stated priority areas in advancing health and medical research in the coming years. Following the announcement in the Chief Executive's 2017 Policy Address, the Steering Committee on Genomic Medicine was set up to recommend strategies for developing genomic medicine to harness the potential of new technology for better public health policies and clinical outcomes.

The Government has allocated about \$1.2 billion to implement the Hong Kong Genome Project, under which about 40 000 to 50 000 whole genome sequencing would be performed to establish a genome database of local population, as well as talent pool and testing infrastructure. All these showcase the Government's strong commitment to promoting clinical application and innovative research on genomic medicine for the benefit of patients and their families. The Hospital Authority has also established a Big Data Analytics Platform (Platform) to facilitate healthcare-related research and innovation. The pilot stage of the Platform was launched in December 2018, under which six research projects from different local universities are ongoing. We expect to formally launch the Platform by the end of this year.

Through the Health and Medical Research Fund (HMRF), funding opportunities are provided for investigator-initiated projects, commissioned programmes and research fellowships. Higher priority for funding will be given to proposals addressing thematic priorities, including application of big data analytics to examine clinical information for better management of non-communicable diseases and applied research in genetics and genomics for personalised medicine, in particular target therapies for cancers.

Under the central theme, the Symposium focuses on how genomics, combined with improvements in data analytics, can lead to improved diagnosis, treatment and prevention of disease and bring about the era of personalised medicine. Many of the research topics presented today address these key issues and explore interventions with potential to improve the health outcomes of the community.

This Symposium is a good platform to disseminate research findings, recognise excellent research and health promotion projects funded by the HMRF, facilitate academic exchange and further collaborative healthcare research. Together, these researches have expanded the local scientific evidence, built capacity in terms of research expertise and infrastructure and generated important findings for clinical practices. The Government will continue to strive to apply the findings from locally generated research to improve health policy and practice for the benefits of everyone in Hong Kong.

I would like to express my gratitude to the renowned overseas speakers and our many local experts for participating in the Symposium and sharing their knowledge and experiences with us. I wish the Symposium a great success and you all a most stimulating and rewarding occasion.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Siu Chee Chan', written over a horizontal line.

Prof. Sophia Siu Chee CHAN, JP
Secretary for Food and Health
The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region