

For yourself and your loved ones,
be future-ready



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Foreword

Life will always present us with unexpected challenges. The COVID-19 outbreak is a vivid reminder of the importance of looking after ourselves and our loved ones. Even though we have emerged from the SARS outbreak in 2003 tougher and wiser, major health threats remain in the form of the Ebola virus, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), Japanese encephalitis, Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease, Measles, Influenza and more. Clearly, we cannot let our guard down.

When it comes to non-infectious diseases, we should be just as alert. The 4 deadliest diseases¹ in Hong Kong - cancer, pneumonia, heart disease, cerebrovascular disease – could strike anyone, at any time, without warning.

As we all know, a healthy diet and regular exercise are key ingredients of a healthy lifestyle, but illness is hard to predict. When a medical problem arises and requires substantial expenses, a suitable medical protection plan can make a big difference in our ability to withstand the financial impact and even provide us with quality treatment options.

It is imperative that we review our medical protection regularly to ensure it has kept pace with our changing needs. Our health, financial circumstances and family responsibilities evolve as we become older. It is only by maintaining an adequate level of medical and health protection through different life stages that we can keep our promises to our loved ones - that we will take good care of ourselves, so that we can take good care of them.

1. Department of Health: Statistics
<https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/statistics/data/10/27/117.html>

Chapter 1:

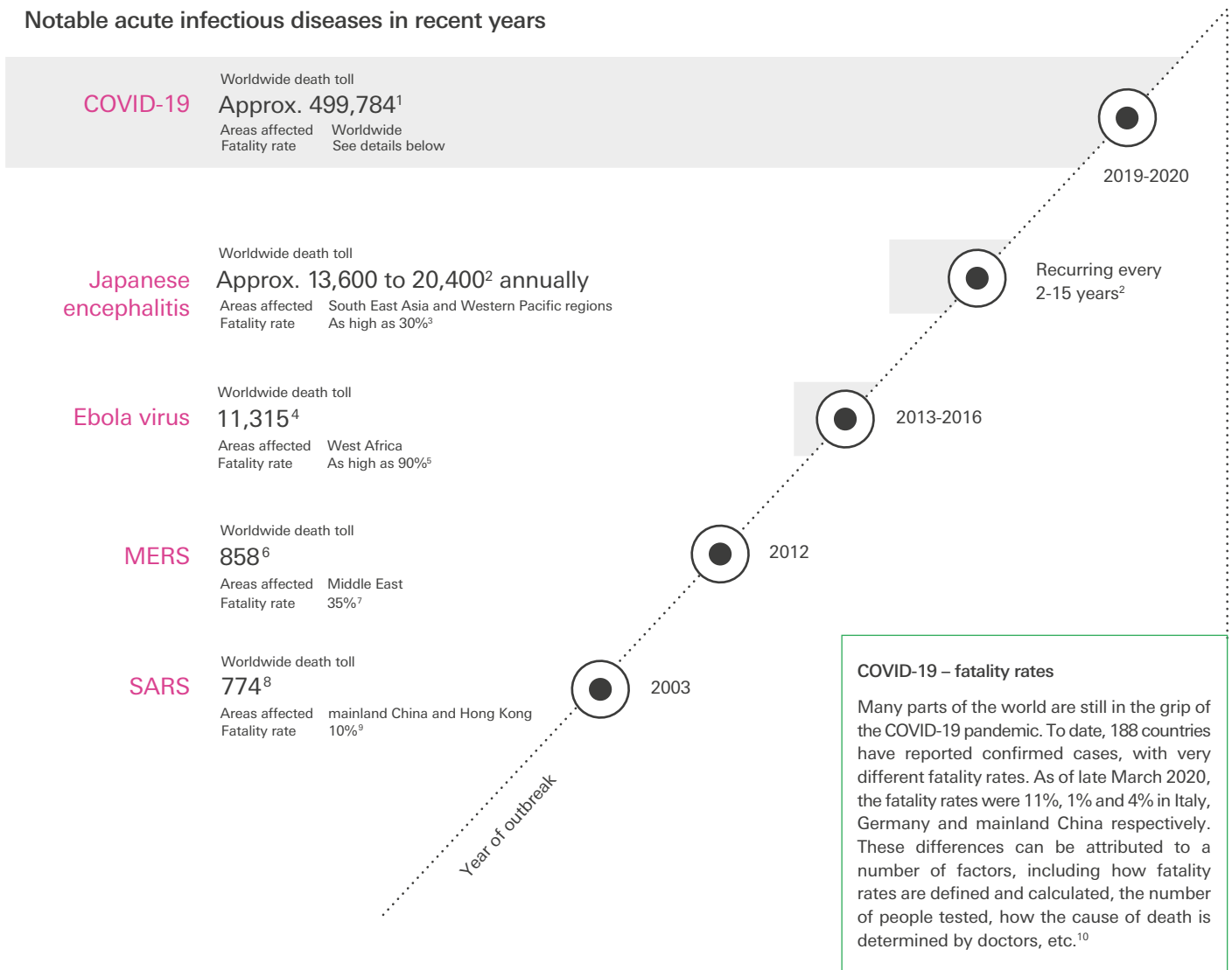
Diseases – better understanding, healthier living

Acute infectious diseases

Our experiences with the COVID-19 and SARS have made it abundantly clear that infectious diseases can impact our lives not just on an individual but on a global level as well. Although we have in recent years become much more health-conscious and hygiene-savvy, bacteria and viruses spread faster in the era of globalisation. Now more than ever, we must observe the strictest hygiene and take all necessary precautions against the spread of viruses.



Notable acute infectious diseases in recent years



1 <https://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/trad/world-52932320> (Data as of 29 Jun 2020)

2 <https://www.who.int/zh/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/japanese-encephalitis>

3 <https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/healthtopics/content/24/28.html>

4 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-28755033>

5 <https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/38614.html>

6 <https://www.who.int/emergencies/mers-cov/en/>

7 <https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/healthtopics/content/24/26528.html>

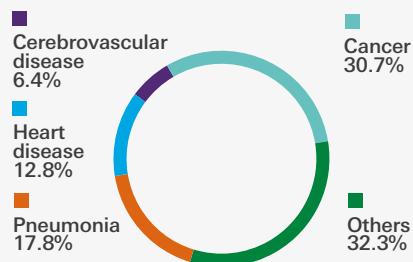
8 <https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/SARS%E7%96%AB%E6%83%85>

9 <https://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/trad/world-51485377>

10 <https://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/trad/world-52212318>

Common life-threatening diseases in Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, the top 4 killers are cancer, pneumonia, heart disease and cerebrovascular disease. According to statistics released by the Department of Health, cancer accounted for 30.7% of all fatalities in Hong Kong in 2018, followed by pneumonia (17.8%), heart disease (12.8%) and cerebrovascular disease (6.4%)¹¹. Even if you're currently in good health, it's always good to learn more about these 4 most feared urban killers. The more you know, the better you can prevent them, for yourself and your loved ones.



Cancer

The no.1 killer in Hong Kong is cancer, the most common forms of which being colorectal cancer, lung cancer and breast cancer¹². According to statistics, cancer was the cause of 14,354 deaths¹² in 2017. By 2030, the number of confirmed diagnoses is projected to have increased by 35%¹³.

Colorectal cancer

Generally, colorectal tumours result from mutating polyps. Causes are thought to include smoking, a red-meat-heavy diet and obesity. Symptoms do not always manifest themselves in the early stages of the disease, but watch out for the following signs:

- ▶ A change in bowel habits for reasons unknown (diarrhoea or constipation), with the change persisting for more than two weeks
- ▶ The presence of blood or large amounts of mucus in stool
- ▶ A feeling that you need to have a bowel movement that's not relieved by having one
- ▶ Abdominal discomfort (persistent pain, bloating, gas, cramping)

The presence of blood in stool could result from haemorrhoids or anal fissures, or it could be a sign of colorectal cancer¹⁴. That is why it's important to see a doctor and identify the cause as soon as possible. Mistaking colorectal cancer for haemorrhoids could delay treatment, with potentially serious consequences.

Lung cancer

Lung cancer is the deadliest form of cancer in Hong Kong, and could be caused by smoking or polluted air. **Symptoms are not pronounced during the early stages.** Since **common lower respiratory tract problems including cough and phlegm** could be caused by COVID-19 and influenza in addition to lung cancer¹⁵, many sufferers neglect to seek timely medical attention. By the time lung cancer is finally diagnosed, it has often advanced to the later stages, which explains the high fatality rate. **If you're coughing up blood and losing weight and appetite**¹⁵, it's important to undergo a thorough health examination immediately.

Breast cancer

Data shows that 10% to 15% of breast cancer cases are caused by sudden genetic mutation¹⁶. If you have a family history of early breast cancer, ovarian cancer or prostate cancer, or your relatives have experienced genetic mutation, you can undergo a genetic test to determine your risk of developing hereditary cancer. For those who are confirmed carriers of Breast Cancer (BRCA) gene, regular screening can enable early detection of breast cancer and increase the chances of recovery¹⁷.

Lumps in the breasts are fairly common. Most fibromas (85%)¹⁸, including fibrocystic diseases, fibroadenoma, breast cysts and fat necroses are **benign** and do not mutate into tumours. But if a fibroma is too large or growing, it needs to be removed surgically. Women should make it a habit of doing a self-examination of their breasts after their menstruation period each month to ensure early detection of any anomaly¹⁹.

Cocktail therapy – a cancer treatment

Research has found that combining chemotherapy, targeted therapy, immunotherapy into a "cocktail" for treating cancer is more effective than using traditional treatments. Mixing certain drugs has been proven to help targeted drugs attack cancerous cells while reducing side-effects^{17,20}. Researchers also believe that the use of drug cocktails can prevent cancerous cells from developing drug resistance²¹.

Pneumonia

Pneumonia is typically caused by bacteria, viruses or fungi. As the second deadliest disease in Hong Kong in 2018²², it was responsible for 8,437 deaths, or 17.8% of all certified fatalities²².

Since the symptoms of pneumonia, such as **sneezing, coughing, runny nose, nasal congestion and fever**, are very similar to those of the common flu and cold, they are often overlooked, resulting in many delays in treatment²³.



11 <https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/statistics/data/10/27/117.html>

12 <https://www3.ha.org.hk/cancereg/topten.html>

13 Hong Kong Cancer Strategy 2019 - Chapter 1: Cancer in Hong Kong https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/aw_report_web_chapter1.pdf

14 <https://health.mingpao.com>

15 <https://www.hkioc.com.hk/zh-hant>

16 <https://www.asiabreastregistry.com/en/hereditary-cancers>

17 <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/08/180801083930.htm>

18 https://www.nhs.uk/translation/cantonese/Documents/Breast_Lump_Cantonese_FINAL.pdf

19 The Family Planning Association of Hong Kong <https://www.famplan.org.hk/en/health-info/common-gynaecological-diseases>

20 <https://health.mingpao.com>

21 http://news.bbc.co.uk/chinese/trad/hi/newsid_1850000/newsid_1852700/1852739.stm

22 <https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/statistics/data/10/27/380.html>

23 <https://health.mingpao.com>



Heart disease

In Hong Kong, heart disease ranks third in fatality, accounting for 12.8%¹ of all deaths.

There are many kinds of heart disease, including congenital heart disease, rheumatic heart disease, heart valve disease, primary cardiomyopathy, coronary artery disease, etc. Of these, coronary artery disease is the most common². In 2017, coronary artery disease resulted in the loss of 3,867 lives, or 8.4% of all registered fatalities³.

Staying alert to warning signs from the heart

Some heart diseases appear without warning. In many cases of coronary artery disease, for example, **the sufferer experiences a sudden tightness or squeezing in the chest, shortness of breath and chest pains after exercising or while under emotional stress**. Since these discomforts often disappear momentarily or after a period of rest, symptoms are easily overlooked⁴.

The heart is responsible for supplying blood to the whole body. A heart problem is not always accompanied by palpitations,

chestpains and other such symptoms, but can instead affect different parts of the body, **causing shortness of breath, swelling in the feet, loss of appetite, persistent coughing and restlessness**. Many people attribute shortness of breath while walking to age, weak lungs, etc. And swelling in the feet is often thought to be caused by kidney issues or standing for too long. But that's not always the case. That's why we should stay alert to the possibility that these symptoms are the body's way of warning us of undetected problems⁵. When in doubt, see a doctor to ensure early treatment.

1 Department of Health: Statistics
<https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/statistics/data/10/27/117.html>

2 <https://heart2heart.mingpao.com>

3 Department of Health https://www.health.gov.hk/phisweb/en/healthy_facts/disease_burden/major_causes_death/coronary_heart_disease/

4 Hong Kong Adventist Hospital Tsuen Wan
<https://www.twah.org.hk/en/services/detail/id/213>

5 <https://health.mingpao.com>

Cerebrovascular disease – stroke

Cerebrovascular disease is the collective name of a group of diseases related to cerebral arteries, and is the fourth deadliest killer in Hong Kong⁶. In 2018, a total of 3,016 deaths in Hong Kong were attributed to these diseases⁷.

F.A.S.T.⁷

Stroke often happens without warning, but as long as we stay alert and act F.A.S.T., we will have a much better chance of securing medical help within the vital 3-hour window:



Face drooping –

uneven or lopsided smile; one side of the face is drooping or numb



Arm weakness –

weakness or numbness in one arm, one arm drifting downward when attempting to raise both arms



Speech difficulty –

slurred speech, sudden inability to speak clearly



Time to call 999 –

if a person shows any of these symptoms, call emergency services and get them to the hospital immediately

Time is of the essence in treating ischemic stroke. If a thrombolytic procedure can be performed within 3 hours of a stroke to break up the blood clots in the brain⁸, the patient has a 40% chance of making a full recovery. To prevent complications, patients need to be monitored continuously while undergoing post-treatment or specialist care after their hospital discharge. Some recovering patients also require physiotherapy.

Service charges by 9 physiotherapy service providers, compiled by the Consumer Council, 2019⁹:

Organisation	Approx. hour rate (minimum hours)
AGA Professional Care (private company)	HKD 2,500 (1)
YWCA Y Senior Care (self-sustaining social enterprise)	HKD 1,200 (0.5)
UniCare360 (private company)	HKD 1,000 - 1,500 (4)
Senior Citizen Home Safety (self-sustaining social enterprise)	HKD 1,000 (1)
Yan Chai Happy Home Living (self-sustaining social enterprise)	HKD 1,000 (1)
Woopie Club (self-sustaining social enterprise)	HKD 800 (1)
Carewell (self-sustaining social enterprise)	HKD 800 (1)
Yang Memorial Methodist Social Service (charitable self-sustaining project)	HKD 600 (1)
CARE U Professional Nursing Service (private company)	HKD 500 (2)



6 Department of Health: Statistics
<https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/statistics/data/10/27/117.html>

7 Department of Health: Non-Communicable Diseases Watch October 2019
https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/ncd_watch_october_2019.pdf

8 <https://health.mingpao.com/>

9 <https://topick.hket.com/article/2271354/>



Other diseases – attention needed

In this age of information explosion, we have become much more knowledgeable about the causes and prevention of different diseases. Health care, however, is a vast and complex discipline, and there many other diseases, such as dementia and mood disorders, that warrant our attention. Only by arming ourselves with a more thorough understanding of these health threats can we prevent them effectively.

- | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | "Care services for elderly persons with dementia", Research Office, Legislative Council, Feb 2017 | 5 | The Centre on Health & Wellness, The Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation |
| 2 | https://www.med.cuhk.edu.hk/press-releases/cuhk-pioneers-in-developing-standardised-tests-for-screening-cognitive-impairment-in-the-ageing-population-in-hong-kong | 6 | Kwong Wah Hospital, Apr 2017 |
| 3 | https://www.gov.hk/tc/residents/employment/recruitment/foreigndomestichelper.htm | 7 | https://www.ezhome.com.hk |
| 4 | Service Charges of Home Care Agencies conducted by the Consumer Council, Feb 2019
https://www.consumer.org.hk/ws_en/news/press/508/home-care-services.html | 8 | Jockey Club Centre for Positive Ageing (Effective date: 1 Sep 2019) |

Dementia

At present, an estimated 5%-8% of Hong Kong people over the age of 65 suffer from dementia, while the percentage for the over-80 population is 20%-30%¹. The total number of dementia patients are projected to more than double² in the next 20 years.

According to the report on Care Services for Elderly Persons with Dementia published by the Legislative Council Research Office in 2017, the total cost of the accommodations and services required to care for dementia patients aged 60 and above will rise from HKD1.6 billion in 2010 to HKD4.2 billion in 2036¹. Hong Kong's aging population will pose major challenges to not just families with dementia patients to care for, but society as a whole.



Automatic Retinal Image Analysis (ARIA) dementia risk assessment imaging test

With advances in medical technology, we now have many procedures for assessing dementia risk. ARIA is a pioneering retina imaging and analysis technology that can accurately predict the likelihood of the disease's occurrence. Images of a person's retinae are captured and uploaded to Health View Bioanalytic's central data processing system¹¹, and results are ready in just 15 minutes¹². Through this technology, cerebral white matter hyperintensities caused by problems with cerebral capillaries can also be detected.

Mood disorders

Hong Kong is a fast-paced city. A 2018 mental health study¹³ found that the mental health of 47.9% of respondents was below standard, while only 14.1% of respondents were mentally healthy. At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the HKSAR government, like many countries in the world, had to severely restrict travel by partially closing their borders. At the same time, citizens were urged to help contain the spread of the virus by staying home. Many people working from home ended up switching from a 9-to-5 routine to a 24-hour workday, which had a decidedly negative impact on their mental and psychological wellbeing.

A University of Hong Kong study has found that the highest post-SARS suicide rate in the city is 100,000:18.8, while preliminary research findings show that 80% to 90% of those who committed suicide had psychiatric problems. Of these, 70% suffered from depression¹⁴.

Hong Kong mental health index¹³

✗
47.9%
Fail

✓
14.1%
Good

Safeguarding health, embracing healthy living

Medical advances have enabled early detection of many diseases as well as timely treatment. Technology, however, cannot offset undesirable lifestyle habits. We know that critical illnesses such as corona artery disease and stroke are linked to high blood pressure, hyperlipidaemia, lack of exercise, obesity, smoking, heavy drinking, etc^{15,16}. The benefits of maintaining a vegetable-focused diet and regular exercise are clear enough, but how many people have the perseverance and discipline to do the right thing for themselves? In addition, living a stressful life can affect both body and mind, so it's important that we do not neglect our mental health. Looking after ourselves and our families involves regular, all-round maintenance of physical, mental and psychological wellness.

The public health measures implemented at the start of 2020 to combat the pandemic have to a certain extent limited the scope of our activities. Working out, however, does not always mean going out. There are many simple exercises, such as sit-ups and running in place, which we can do at home to burn off our excess calories. The same goes for a number of yoga exercises which are ideal for stretching our bodies and managing our moods without leaving home.

Expenses for caring for dementia patients:

Domestic helper's minimum wage⁹
HKD 4,630

Physiotherapy⁴
HKD 500 - 2,500

Speech therapy & swallowing exercise⁵
(assessment fee)

HKD 300
(per session)

HKD 750
(per hour)

The Centre on Health & Wellness,
The Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation

Acupuncture⁶
HKD 180 - 250
(per session)

Kwong Wah Hospital
Chinese medicine practitioner

Massage⁷
HKD 320
(per hour)

EZHome massage service

Day care centre for elderly⁸
HKD 435 - 565

(pick-up service charges
based on location)
Jockey Club Centre for
Positive Ageing (per day)

Nursing home⁹
HKD 20,000 - 40,000
(monthly)

Medical expenses including
medications¹⁰
HKD 1,000 per month
(1 consultation every 2 months)
Private doctor

Home caregiver/medical
escort service¹⁰

HKD 800 - 1,600

(based on 8 hours per month)
Humana

9 Provided by Hong Kong Lutheran Social Service

10 Humana Rehabilitation & Wellness Enhancement

11 The central data processing system of the cognitive health check is operated and managed by Health View Bioanalytic Limited

12 The whole process includes retina imaging and the analysis of the results

13 <http://mhm2018.org/>

14 <https://health.hkej.com/health/article?suid=2379632>

15 Care For Your Heart
https://www.careheart.org.hk/?page_id=47

16 Department of Health: Non-Communicable Diseases Watch October 2019
https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/ncd_watch_october_2019.pdf

Chapter 2:

Long-term medical challenges

Challenge 1

Long waiting periods for medical services

Advances in medical technology are one of the key contributors to our increasing life expectancy. Longevity, however, is not without its challenges. In Hong Kong, an aging population translates into consistently rising demands for medical services. According to the life expectancy data published by the Japan Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare in 2018, Hong Kong has retained its title as the city with the longest life expectancies in the world¹. Women in Hong Kong live for an average of 87.6 years, while the average lifespan for men is 82.2 years. Both are world-leading figures, surpassing even those of Japan, a country famous for its high proportions of octogenarians and centenarians. At the same time, as the baby boomers born after the war begin to reach old age, the over-65 population is projected to rise by 57%, from 1.16 million in 2016 (17% of total population) to 1.82 million in 2026 (25%), further rising by another 30% to 2.37 million by 2036 (31%). By that time, 1 in 3 persons in Hong Kong will be a senior citizen².

An aging population requires more doctors. In 2018, Hong Kong had 2.0 doctors per 1,000 citizens, the lowest ratio in developed territories in Asia, behind South Korea (2.3), Singapore (2.4), Japan (2.4) and Australia (3.7)³. And the shortage of doctors and nurses is expected to become more acute. Since the number of patients has already exceeded the full capacity of all the hospitals under the Hospital Authority, public hospitals now prioritise cases based on severity and urgency. According to the latest data from the Hospital Authority, for non-urgent new cases requiring specialist outpatient care, the longest waiting period for general medicine is 165 weeks in Hong Kong Island West. That means some patients are looking at a 3-year wait before they can receive medical attention⁴. As a result, patients seeking immediate medical attention may have to turn to private doctors or look overseas. The costs involved, however, are beyond what a typical family can afford.

Challenge 2

Medical inflation

Battling a major illness takes a strong will as well as a good doctor who can provide different treatment options. But new medical technologies are not cheap, and with an aging population, demand for medical services is far exceeding supply. The result is medical inflation. Today, the cost of getting quality treatment for a major illness can be quite overwhelming. A survey has found that medical inflation in Hong Kong has risen by 8.3%⁵ in 2020, further proof of the strong correlation between an aging population and rising medical cost. That's why planning ahead and getting adequate medical protection for yourself and your family is crucial to your ability to overcome future challenges. But are Hong Kong people sufficiently aware of the need for medical insurance?

Expenses for treating life-threatening diseases in Hong Kong

Heart disease

Balloon angioplasty and stenting⁶

Reference cost

Up to HKD 200,000

Less-Invasive valve repair for mitral regurgitation⁷

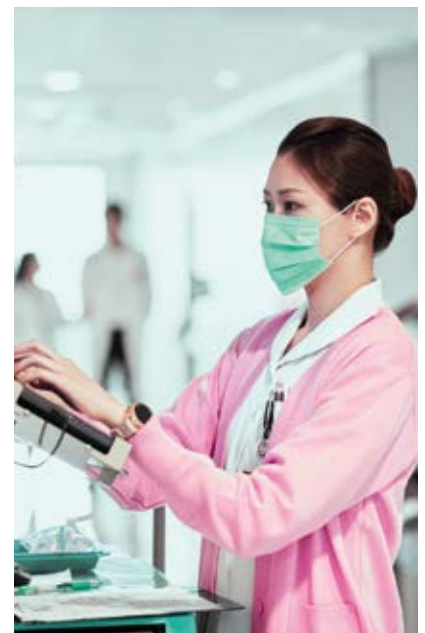
Reference cost

Up to HKD 180,000

Minimally-Invasive treatment of atrial septal defect⁸

Reference cost

Up to HKD 50,000



1 <https://www.hk01.com>

2 Hong Kong Monthly Digest of Statistics: Hong Kong Population Projections for 2017 to 2066 <https://www.statistics.gov.hk/pub/B71710FA2017XXXXB0100.pdf>

3 <https://www.legco.gov.hk/research-publications/chinese/1819in13-admission-of-overseas-trained-doctors-in-singapore-and-australia-20190509-c.pdf>

4 "Waiting Time for Stable New Case Booking at Specialist Out-patient Clinics", Hospital Authority https://www.ha.org.hk/haho/ho/sopc/dw_wait_ls.pdf

5 <https://admedilink.hk/why-is-medical-inflation-going-through-the-roof/>

6 <https://topick.hket.com/article/2151431/>

7 <https://topick.hket.com/article/2193724/>

8 <http://archive.am730.com.hk/article-26002>

Diagnostic services for colorectal cancer

Colonoscopy⁹

Reference cost

Up to HKD24,000

Colectomy (Laparoscopic)⁹

Reference cost

Up to HKD168,000

Diagnostic services for breast cancer

Ultrasound guided excision of breast lump¹⁰

Reference cost

Up to HKD44,000

Targeted therapy¹¹

Reference cost

Up to HKD270,000

Diagnostic services for lung cancer

Bronchoscopy / Specimen collection by means of biopsies⁹

Reference cost for hospitalisation

Approx. HKD41,000

Stroke

Emergency treatments for stroke¹²

Reference cost

Up to HKD 102,500



⁹ Refer to 50th percentile of Historical Bill Size for Common Treatments / Procedures (Accommodation in Standard Wards) in St. Paul's Hospital in 2018

¹⁰ Refer to the mean of charges of common surgery of October 2019 to March 2020 in Union Hospital https://www.union.org/new/english/charges/files/CCSUH_eng.pdf

¹¹ Hong Kong Breast Cancer And Disease Centre

¹² <https://health.mingpao.com/>

Challenge 3

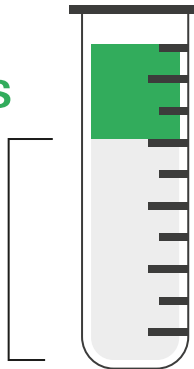
Time needed to develop new medicines

New medicines are stronger, which can improve quality of life, reduce side effects and extend life expectancy. But developing a new medicine is a long and arduous process requiring major resources. On average, it takes a new medicine 10 years to complete the journey from research laboratories to the market. Clinical testing alone averages 6-7 years¹. In the meantime, patients can only rely on existing medicines to keep their illnesses under control and hope for the arrival of new medicines. An added issue is that most new medicines are patented and are therefore only available at prices not everyone can afford. For most patients, newer and better medicines equal bigger budgets.

Developing new medicines

10 years

Clinical testing
6-7 years



Health protection gap

In Hong Kong as in many other countries, rising medical costs have given rise to a health protection gap, which refers to the phenomenon of families coming under financial pressure as a result of medical expenses, and the cost to society as a whole of providing basic health care for demographic groups that cannot afford it. According to a study by Swiss Re, the health protection gaps in 12 Asian markets totalled USD1.8 trillion in 2017. In Hong Kong, the gap is estimated to be USD23 billion, and medical expenses take up an average of 7% of a typical family's household income. Among the groups exposed to healthcare-related financial pressures are the elderly, 26% of whom are especially vulnerable to non-regular medical expenses; even 21% of high-income families have to contend with heavy financial burdens due to the more expensive medical services they typically opt for³. In view of all this, having an adequate medical protection plan in place to help cope with potential medical expenses becomes even more crucial to our future wellbeing.

Challenge 4

The impact of drug resistance and genetic mutation

Another challenge the medical community faces is the fact that many pathogens tend to develop drug resistance over time, resulting in mutation that strengthens them against further intervention. If antibiotics are not administered properly, for example, some bacteria might survive and subsequently mutate into a more virulent strain, ultimately rendering the antibiotics ineffective. It has been found that pneumococcus becomes more resistant to penicillin by 14% in just one year; in Hong Kong, cases of pneumococcus surviving treatment using penicillin² have also been reported. Clearly, bacteria which are normally easily treatable but which have become drug-resistant pose a significant challenge to effective treatment.



1 http://phrma-docs.phrma.org/sites/default/files/pdf/rd_brochure_022307.pdf

2 <https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/med/hep/antibiotics/ch4.htm>

3 The Health Protection Gap in Asia 2018, Swiss Re Institute
https://www.swissre.com/dam/jcr:2d850981-ab0b-48e6-bd52-d7d07c2c3f4e/health_protection_gap_china_cn.pdf

Chapter 3:

Do you have enough medical protection?

To tackle the medical challenges mentioned above, we can purchase a comprehensive medical insurance plan, which will supplement future medical costs or even give us overseas medical options. However, awareness of the importance of medical protection is rather low in Hong Kong. Looking at statistics from the Census and Statistics Department for 2016, we can see that there were 1.48 million holders of individual medical policies in Hong Kong, a mere 21%⁴ of the total population. In contrast, a 2017 survey conducted in the U.S. found that people with personal medical insurance made up 62.6%⁵ of the total population. Clearly, the prevalence of personal medical insurance among Hong Kong people has some way to go to catch up to other developed countries. In view of this, the Hong Kong SAR government launched the Voluntary Health Insurance Scheme (VHIS) last year to promote wider acceptance of individual medical insurance.



Equip yourself; there are always more solutions than problems

Voluntary Health Insurance Scheme (VHIS)

On 1 April, 2019, the Hong Kong Food and Health Bureau launched the Voluntary Health Insurance Scheme, with the aim of raising the overall level of protection offered by hospitalisation insurance products. The scheme's wider coverage would also provide Hong Kong citizens with an extra option, giving them access to private medical services and easing the pressures on the public medical system⁶. VHIS products are required to meet the minimum standards specified by the Food and Health Bureau in the basic medical protection they provide:

Expanding the scope of coverage to enhance basic protection:

Coverage for unknown pre-existing conditions

Currently, unknown pre-existing conditions are generally not covered by insurance. Certified VHIS plans, however, provide partial coverage of unknown pre-existing conditions during the 3-year transition period (no reimbursement during the 1st policy year, 25% reimbursement in the 2nd year and 50% in the 3rd year) and full coverage starting from the 4th policy year (100%).

Prescribed diagnostic imaging tests

These include CT scans not performed at a hospital, MRI scans, PER scans, PET-CT combined and PET-MRI combined scans. For these procedures, the insured person is subject to a 30% coinsurance.

Prescribed non-surgical cancer treatments

Including radiotherapy, chemotherapy, targeted therapy, immunotherapy and hormonal therapy.

Psychiatric treatments

Includes hospitalisation and treatment in the psychiatric ward of a local hospital.

Treatments for congenital diseases

VHIS covers the diagnosis and treatment of congenital diseases that manifest themselves after the insured's 8th birthday. Claim procedures and reimbursement arrangements are the same as those for unknown pre-existing conditions.

Day case procedure

Surgical procedures for which hospitalisation is not necessary (specifically, oesophago-gastro-duodenoscopy and colonoscopy that are required as part of the treatment).

Other protections:

21-day cooling-off period

A policyholder who chooses to cancel his/her policy during the 21-day cooling-off period will receive a full refund of all premiums paid.

Transparency

An insurance company providing certified VHIS products is required to fully disclose its age-based premium structures.

Guaranteed renewal up to age 100

No lifetime benefit limit
A maximum benefit amount of HKD420,000 per policy year.

Differences between Standard and Flexi plans

VHIS products come in 2 categories: Standard and Flexi plans. Standard plans' scope of coverage conforms with the minimum VHIS standards mentioned above and provides the insured person with basic hospitalisation protection. The standard plans provided by different insurance companies are generally similar, the main differences being premium levels, brand recognition and service quality. On the other hand, flexi plans are designed to expand on the framework of the standard plans, providing a range of additional protections, such as higher sum insured, coverage of overseas treatments and more expense items, giving the insured person more comprehensive protection.

Tax deduction

In addition, tax payers can apply for tax deduction for eligible premiums paid for VHIS policies purchased for themselves and their family members. The maximum tax-deductible amount is HKD8,000 per insured person per assessment year. And there's no limit to the number of policies or insured persons eligible for tax deduction⁶.

Supplementing your existing medical insurance plan

If you have a group medical policy, we strongly advise that you pay attention to whether the protection it provides is adequate for your needs. Since this kind of medical coverage will terminate when the insured person retires or leaves the company, you should review your existing group policy and determine whether you need additional protection. A VHIS plan could be just what you need to complete your medical safety net.

4 <https://www.legco.gov.hk/research-publications/chinese/1718rb03-health-insurance-for-individuals-in-hong-kong-20180703-c.pdf>

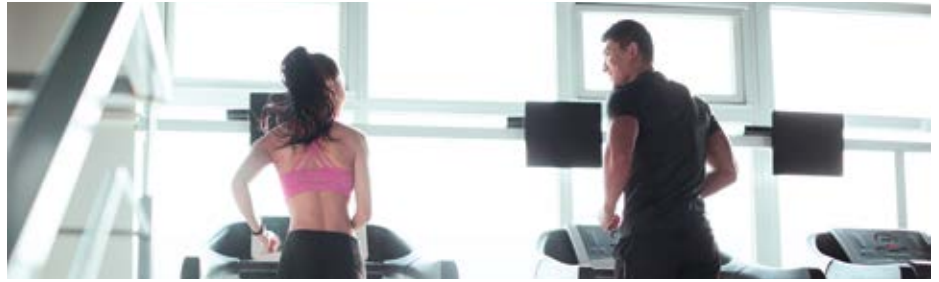
5 <https://www.statista.com/topics/1530/health-insurance-in-the-us/>

6 www.ird.gov.hk

Overseas medical solutions

VHIS products can prove valuable in giving people more financial support in a medical contingency, especially in view of the many challenges Hong Kong’s medical system is facing. With the enhanced financial capabilities they provide, local private medical services as well as overseas treatments can be added to a policyholder’s consideration set.

In recent years, medical vacations have become increasingly popular, and Thailand, Taiwan and Singapore, among others, are now many people’s preferred destinations for treating lesser illnesses. For more complicated medical problems, technologically advanced countries like the U.S. remain top choices.



Asia

As Hong Kong grapples with its medical challenges, Asian countries and territories such as Thailand, Taiwan and Singapore are tapping into the potential of the medical vacation market. In 2019, the U.S. magazine *CEO World* conducted a survey of the healthcare systems in 89 countries worldwide. Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia ranked 1, 2, 3, 6, 24 and 34 respectively¹. Of these, Singapore started promoting medical vacations as early as 2003 by offering a range of specialist services including joint replacement, coronary bypass, dental and eye surgeries to visitors². In Thailand, most hospitals have obtained ISO 9001 certification, and combine 5-star-hotel-level accommodations, quality medical services and reasonable prices to attract foreign visitors, especially those who need knee or heart surgery³.

U.S.

TAVR heart valve replacement surgery

Medical standards in the U.S. are among the highest in the world; many American hospitals’ expertise in heart surgery is well-known. In 2018, there were no fewer than 642 hospitals in the U.S. that could host TAVR microsurgery, combining for a total of 60,000 completed operations⁴. For patients elsewhere, this level of capability represents another viable option. The cost of undergoing a TAVR operation in the U.S. in 2016 was approximately USD60,000⁵.

Heart transplants

There are a number of hospitals in the U.S. that are capable of carrying out heart transplant procedures. In 2018, 3,408 heart transplant operations⁶ were performed in the U.S.. According to research, that number is expected to rise to 3,499 in 2020. A heart transplant is one of the most expensive surgical procedures in the U.S., costing approximately USD1,664,800. These procedures are highly complicated and carry considerable risks, requiring on average a waiting period of 213 days and a 50-day hospital stay⁷.

Artificial heart transplant

Many patients with serious heart conditions need a heart transplant, and the wait for a suitable replacement organ could last for years, during which an artificial heart may need to be installed as a temporary substitute. In the U.S., an artificial heart transplant, including surgeon’s fee, equipment and follow-up medical services, costs USD100,000 to USD300,000 a year⁸. There have also been numerous breakthroughs in artificial heart transplant technology, including the artificial BiVACOR maglev heart, a private sector innovation designed to be smaller and lighter in order to reduce the burden on patients in their daily life. Many hope that this technology will soon be certified and made available to more patients⁹.

Not yet available in Hong Kong - Proton therapy

In traditional radiation therapy, high-energy photon beams are used to reach the malignant tumour in a patient’s body. Although this can destroy the tumour, the residual radiation will continue to penetrate healthy cells, killing many of them and giving rise to different side effects which are detrimental to the patient’s wellbeing¹⁰. With the new proton therapy, however, large doses of protons can be directed towards the cancerous cells accurately and at a limited depth, thus preventing residual radiation damage to healthy cells and significantly reducing side effects¹⁰. There are currently 65 proton therapy centres in the world, 27 of which are in the U.S.. In Asia, proton therapy is available in Japan, Korea, Taiwan and mainland China¹¹. In Hong Kong, however, the first proton therapy facility is not scheduled to enter service until 2022¹². That means Hong Kong patients who need this type of therapy urgently will have to look elsewhere.

Among those who have received proton therapy in the U.S. is a 5-year-old patient diagnosed with medulloblastoma. According to reports, the treatment itself cost approximately USD12,000¹⁰. Since proton therapy is at present only available overseas, the costs for Hong Kong patients will also include air travel, accommodations, expenses for a stay-behind period for post-treatment convalescence, etc. If someone is accompanying the patient on the trip, extra expenditure will have to be budgeted for. Bear in mind as well that the case of the 5-year-old patient is but one of many examples and is provided here for reference only. Actual expenses will vary according to different circumstances.

1 <https://ceoworld.biz/2019/08/05/revealed-countries-with-the-best-health-care-systems-2019/>
 2 http://www.3phk.com/v5article2.asp?id=1830&folder=hot_topics§ion=healthinfo&issue=
 3 <http://www.thaiembassy.org/xian/contents/files/services-20150913-162523-023210.pdf>
 4 <https://www.medtechina.com/zh-cn/MarketDetail/newsid/2193>
 5 [Journal of the American College of Cardiology http://www.onlinejacc.org/content/70/18_Supplement/B268.1](http://www.onlinejacc.org/content/70/18_Supplement/B268.1)
 6 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/671451/heart-transplants-number-us/>
 7 [2020 U.S. organ and tissue transplants: Cost estimates, discussion, and emerging issues https://milliman-cdn.azureedge.net/-/media/milliman/pdfs/articles/2020-us-organ-tissue-transplants.ashx](https://milliman-cdn.azureedge.net/-/media/milliman/pdfs/articles/2020-us-organ-tissue-transplants.ashx)

**Global medical services
One-stop overseas
medical support**

A major illness takes a financial and psychological toll not just on the patient but the family as well. That’s why some premium medical protection plans on the market also provide global medical solutions and support. One example is HSBC Life’s Health Goal Insurance Plan, which includes value-added global medical care services provided by Preferred Global Health (PGH). The plan is designed to give cancer, heart disease and stroke patients access to not only all-round, personalised medical care but the input of some of the over 6,700 Harvard-class specialists at top U.S. hospitals affiliated with the plan. The treatment journey will include second medical opinion, treatment strategies, doctor-to-doctor dialogue, and medical services in the U.S., all aimed at providing the most appropriate treatment plans to help the patient fight the battle with confidence.

Second medical opinion and treatment plans

A group of Harvard-class U.S. specialists will conduct an in-depth review of each case, then provide their expert medical opinions and propose optimal treatment strategies.

Doctor-to-doctor dialogue

We will arrange video conferences between the insured person’s doctor in Hong Kong and the team of U.S. specialists to allow them to exchange insights and perspectives, and reach a consensus on the best treatment plan to adopt.

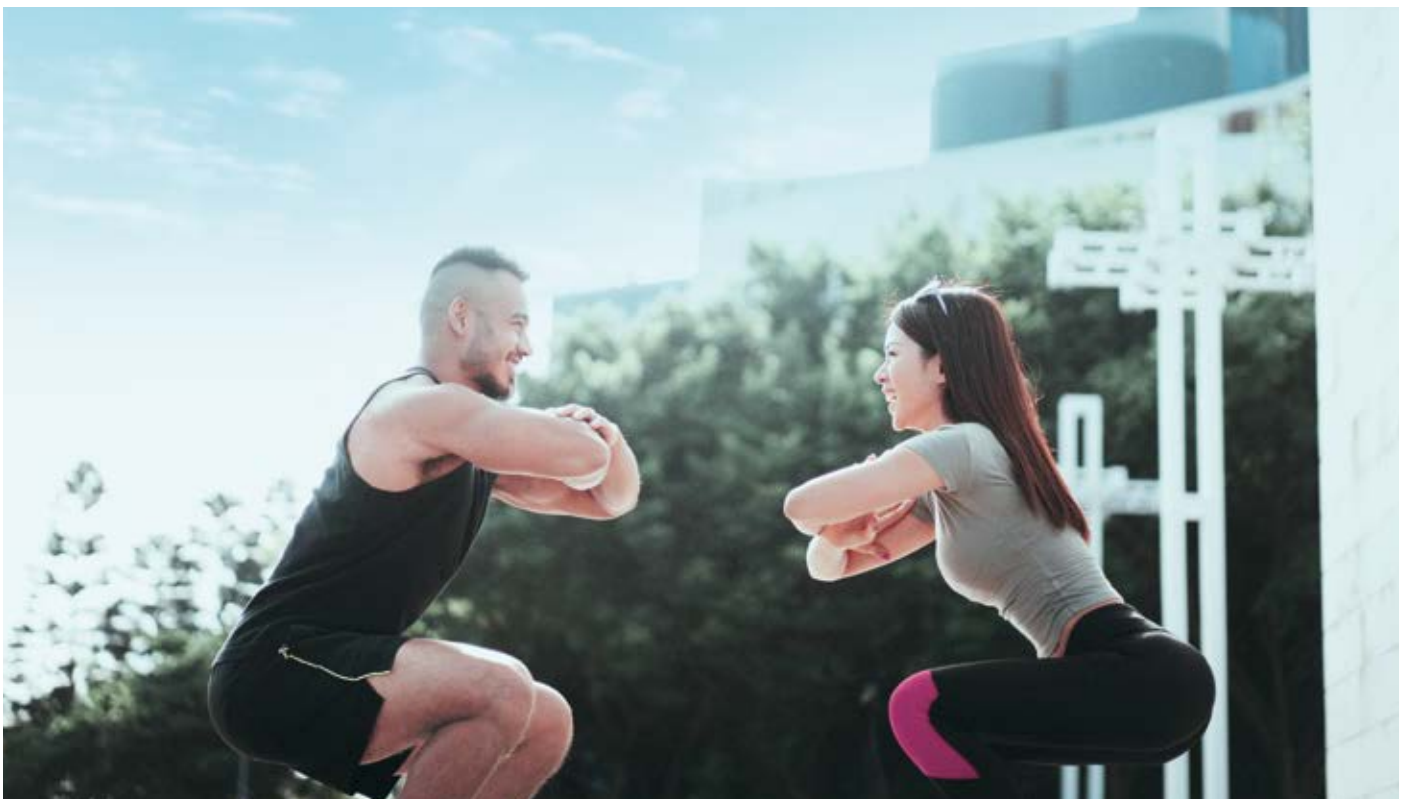
U.S. medical concierge services¹³

Dedicated personnel will make all necessary medical appointments, arrange all-round VIP support services for the insured person and his/her companion in the U.S.

The case of a real-life PGH customer¹⁴

Making the best plan for taking the best care

Stephen, 45, had unfortunately been diagnosed with bladder cancer. Because there were differences of opinion on the best treatment plan, he decided to turn to PGH for help and obtain a second opinion. The dedicated medical care officer assigned by PGH, Mandy, worked closely with a top U.S. specialist to verify the diagnosis and prepare a treatment proposal. She also arranged video interface between Stephen’s doctor in Hong Kong and a team of leading U.S. specialists for a multilateral, in-depth case review. After Stephen decided to go to the U.S. for treatment, PGH recommended the chief urological surgeon (and a Harvard Medical School professor) at the Harvard-affiliated Dana Farber Cancer Institute as Stephen’s attending physician. All medical appointments and related arrangements were made by Mandy, who was on hand throughout to accompany Stephen and his wife until they returned to Hong Kong after Stephen’s recovery.



8 The artificial heart. Costs, risks, and benefits – an update.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/10311835>
9 <https://bivacor.com>
10 <https://health.mingpao.com/>
11 <https://health.mingpao.com/>

12 <https://health.mingpao.com/>
13 All extra expenses incurred were borne by the policyholder.
14 Preferred Global Health
<https://www.pghworld.com/zh-hant/Services-Hongkong/stories-testimonials>



Chapter 4: Featured interviews

Crossing cultures, listening with the heart

Ms. Yu Ka Ling
Yan Chai Hospital Chinese Medicine Clinic (Kwai Tsing)
Senior Chinese Medicine Practitioner

Ms. Yu Ka Ling holds a Bachelor of Chinese Medicine degree and a Bachelor of Medical Biology degree from Hong Kong’s Baptist University. She also has a master’s degree in acupuncture, and is a Chinese medicine oncological specialist. Her training enables her to combine Chinese and Western medical knowledge and bring a unique cross-cultural expertise to her work as a Chinese medicine practitioner and acupuncturist. Ms. Yu believes that in a fast-paced, high-pressure environment like Hong Kong, slowing down and taking the time to communicate with patients is an important link in the treatment process. After all, a good doctor should not only heal the body but soothe the mind.



Q1. Are certain kinds of people at higher risk of developing cancer? Other than factors such as obesity, stress and family history, what other causes are there?

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There are different schools of thought regarding that. Some think that being overweight, living a stressful life, having a family history and even endocrine disorders can all make us more prone to illness. But there are also many cases that can be attributed to external factors and bad lifestyle habits. Construction workers, for example, are exposed to certain chemical materials and substances daily. This could make them more susceptible to pneumoconiosis, which could in turn develop into lung cancer. People who drink a lot have higher chances of

developing liver cancer and cirrhosis. Some women who are going through menopause need to take hormonal medicines regularly, which could lead to endocrine problems and increase the likelihood of gynaecological cancers, including problems with the endometrium, ovarian gene mutation, etc. And our moods can have an effect too; for example, women are often tense and anxious, which could result in liver and breast cancer.

Q2. What are the differences between Chinese and Western medicines in the treatment of cancer? How should the two complement each other?

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Chinese medicine focuses on holistic treatment while Western medicine takes a more targeted approach. During the early, middle and late stages of an illness and also after surgery, Chinese medicine prescribes corrective treatments to restore health gradually based on the patient’s condition. We also remind patients to maintain 2-hour intervals between Chinese and Western medications.

Q3. How does Chinese medicine treat cancer? How should patients choose Chinese medicine practitioner?

Chinese cancer treatments revolve around Chinese herbal medicine and acupuncture. Chinese medicine practitioner will prescribe treatments based on a careful examination of the symptoms, and the patient’s physiology and condition. Acupuncture works in the same way, the only difference being the use of needles and heat.

In oncology, the emphasis is on Western medicine. From diagnosis, treatment to post-treatment care, Western medicine plays a prominent role throughout the process. If you opt for Chinese medicine, you should only choose from Chinese medicine practitioners who have a background in oncology. They have had Western oncological training, which is important since, during consultation, the Chinese medicine practitioner will need to review the latest blood test and diagnostic results. And there may be incompatibilities between Chinese and Western medicines, and both can impose a heavy burden on the liver and increase the levels of liver enzymes. So the best thing to do is to see a Chinese medicine practitioner with oncology qualifications. They are able to read and analyse Western medical reports and prescribe treatments accordingly.

Q4. How does Chinese medicine work in cancer treatment, especially acupuncture?

People seek help from Chinese acupuncturists mainly for pain relief, and pain can be cancer-related or non-cancer-related. Chinese medicine practitioner may recommend acupuncture as a way to alleviate the effects of the neurological toxins in chemotherapy, such as numbness in the limbs and insomnia. There are also side effects which impact the gastrointestinal tract and which can also be treated with acupuncture. For patients suffering from edema, insomnia or fatigue, we generally prescribe heat treatments.

Q5. How do Chinese medicine practitioner complement surgical procedures?

We prescribe Chinese herbal medicines to help strengthen the patient’s body for the operation. If the patient is suffering from anxiety, we also help alleviate that. After surgery, the patient is usually weak, and we would prescribe medicines to help replenish his “qi” and blood supply. Fever, infection, excessive eating, all these need to be treated. And stomach operations can cause problems with bowel movements. Chinese medicines or acupuncture can help too.

Q6. Which types of cancer are better treated with Chinese medicine?

Chinese medicine tends to yield more noticeable results against physical malignant tumours, such as breast, lung, intestinal cancer and some gynaecological cancers. We are less involved in haematological cancers, since the pathology is more complicated.

Q7. Are there patients who choose Chinese cancer treatment exclusively? How effective is it?

Generally, medicine in Hong Kong is Western-centric, and Chinese medicine tends to play a more complementary role. There are usually 3 scenarios in which a patient would choose to use Chinese cancer treatment exclusively:

1. Western doctors have determined that the cancer is inoperable, or predicted that surgery would not be effective.
2. Financial reasons. The patient cannot afford expensive Western treatments, such as targeted therapy.
3. Some elderly patients think Western treatment would be too much of an ordeal, and that they are not tough enough to take it.

Whether it’s Chinese or Western medicine, efficacy varies from individual to individual. How well a treatment works depends on how malignant the cancer is, the patient’s psychological quality, family support, etc. It’s hard to say whether Chinese or Western medicine is better. I have a patient, an elderly lady with stage-4 lung cancer. The cancerous cells have spread to her bones, but her family have not told her because they don’t want to burden her with the truth. She has been treated exclusively with Chinese medicine. It’s been 2 years now, so the treatment has delivered good results for the patient.

Q8. Does Chinese medicine require more discipline and perseverance? How do you encourage your patients?

It’s true many patients give up on a treatment at an early stage. For prescribed treatments to work, patients have to stay the course and see it through. Unlike Western medicine, which is much more combative and forceful, Chinese treatment takes longer to yield results. So we need to be more communicative with our patients, saying the right things to give them more confidence and resolve their inner conflicts. We see this as part of the treatment.

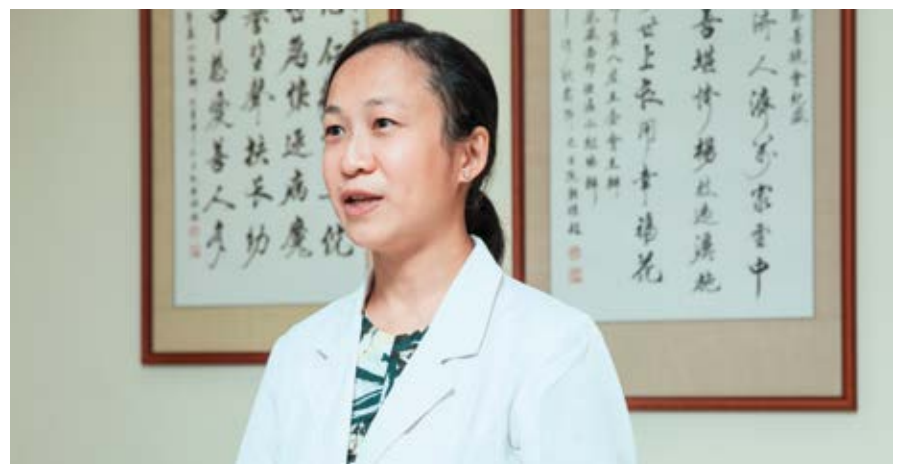
Hong Kong is a hectic place, and public hospitals have too many patients to look after. Doctors typically don’t have enough time to communicate with their patients. As a result, patients often lack a clear understanding of their own conditions. Chinese medicine is predicated on removing patients’ doubts and eliminating their fears and worries.

Q9. In Chinese medicine, there is the concept of “treating future illness”. This is similar to the idea of preparing for a rainy day in insurance. How do we treat those who are not sick yet?

When we find any anomalies in our bodies, we have to take it seriously. If you can’t sleep, for example, there might be a problem with your liver. So you should go see a doctor soon.

Q10. Do you have any health advice for Hong Kong people?

Living in Hong Kong can be stressful. People have different ways of decompressing. Some indulge in big meals, others shop or exercise. If it works for you, it’s good for you. For some people, even just having somebody to talk to can be very therapeutic.





Healing the soul with music

Kingman Chung, Registered Music Therapist

Music is an art, a passion, and a tonic for the soul. Kingman Chung learned to play the harmonica to strengthen his tracheae when he was small, and ended up falling in love with music. Since completing his master's degree in music therapy, he has been using music to help children with special needs, chronic patients, people with emotional problems, stroke patients and their families.



Q1. How does music therapy work for stroke and cancer patients?

Different kinds of stroke can damage different cognitive and bodily functions, including speech, various physical abilities and even moods. If someone has developed aphasia after having a stroke in the left brain, we would use music therapy to help restore his speech. With our help, the patient would re-learn vocalisation, enunciation and sentence structures, etc. Music activities are often added under the guidance of a physiotherapist to make the exercises easier to do, while the emotional support we provide can be very motivational.

With cancer patients, it depends on what stage they are at. Those who have just been diagnosed need psychological support to adjust to the shock. Those who are undergoing treatment have to deal with both the physical and psychological impact; anxiety and depression are common, and our emotional support is often needed. Many breast cancer

patients need to undergo physiotherapy to lessen the side effects of the treatment. And then there are the terminally ill. During their final days, we would help them write songs as a way to leave behind heartfelt parting words for their loved ones.

We also take music therapy to the community. In 2013, we organised a choir made up of cancer patients and their family members. And the next year, we organised another one for stroke patients and their families. During one session, they sang the song "Upstream, Downstream", and afterwards, we asked the members to share with us their feelings about the song and the message they took from it. Sometimes, we would ask them to do stretching exercises as a way to de-stress both emotionally and physically. The choir helps them reach therapeutic goals through the cathartic experience of group singing. We'll also make CDs of their song renditions to help facilitate their self-validation.

Q2. Do the patients show improvement after music therapy?

Yes. There is the case of a senior nurse who was nearing retirement. She was really good at her job, but had to stop working because of cancer. Since she had a hard time coming to terms with her condition, she developed many physiological and psychological problems and couldn't sleep at night. So we wrote songs with her, which allowed her to express her feelings through music therapy and provided an outlet for her fraught emotions. At first, the lyrics she wrote were all very negative. In the end, though, she came to believe that even though life had its ups and downs, what she was going through would eventually pass. She listened to the song she wrote a lot, both before and after her operation, which motivated her to leave her emotional baggage behind, re-orient her outlook and persist with the treatment. She has since recovered and gone back to work, and has no plans to retire. So music therapy has helped her through a really tough period in her life.



Q3. Generally, how long does it take music therapy to work? What are the costs?

It depends on the case. Generally:

- ▶ Stroke patients have to practise on a regular basis. And their families need to learn how to take care of them with our help, which could take 1 to 3 years. This course of treatment requires 1 to 3 sessions per week, with each session lasting one hour.
- ▶ Cancer patients need a weekly 1.5 hour session for 8 to 12 weeks.
- ▶ For mood disorders, generally, it's once or twice a week, with each session lasting an hour and a half.
- ▶ Dementia patients need one session a week. Late-afternoon sessions are especially useful for treating Sundown Syndrome.
- ▶ For children with special learning needs, once a week. Each session is 30 to 45 minutes and can take place at home. During the period of social distancing, some parents requested two weekly sessions of social skills and attention training for their children.

The average fee is HKD1,000 to HKD1,500 per hour, subject to the clinical experience and expertise of the therapist.

Q4. Do families come to you for help because of the pressure of caring for patients?

Family members often want the patient to get treatment first, and neglect their own need for help. We collaborate with social service providers to offer music therapy to patients' families. Our choirs, for example, include many family members.

Q5. Based on what you've seen, have mood disorders become worse during the pandemic?

Mood disorders have always been there, but the pandemic has made it worse by restricting social activities. For example, the higher hygiene standards required during the pandemic aggravated many compulsive disorders. Some patients who were compulsive cleaners before now became obsessive. Social distancing has given rise to a lot of negative emotions and caused serious disruptions to our daily routines. We all need time to adjust, though many Hong Kong people can make up for it through social media. Also, children who normally need therapy have had to stay home, and this has put more pressure on their families because they need to be looked after.

Q6. The pandemic has led to the use of AR technology to help patients with many daily tasks. Have you had any such experiences?

The outbreak has made it difficult to provide face-to-face therapy. We have produced a number of therapy videos that allow patients of mood disorders to follow the exercises at home. Some therapy cannot be put on hold as interruptions could affect the patients negatively. For stroke patients, there is a golden period for recovery during which they need regular therapy, but many of them may not be in a condition to leave their homes. Through an online platform, we can continue to provide therapy without requiring them to leave home, sparing them the inconvenience and fatigue.

Q7. What suggestions do you have for stressed-out Hong Kong people?

We can alleviate pressure in 3 ways:

First, give yourself first aid – take some rest and let yourself quiet down, listen to music, do exercises. Second, **find somebody you trust** to be your confidant and designated listener. If these don't work, **seek help from professionals**, such as registered therapists, counsellors, psychologists or doctors. There are many channels, find the one that works for you, or even seek help from social workers. The social service community in Hong Kong is a source of support in many different areas.

Chapter 5:

Case studies

Case 1 Mid- to late-stage colorectal cancer

Kenneth and his wife Nicole are newlyweds. Both are in their 30s and work at an accounting firm. They have just bought an apartment as their new home. Kenneth understands that his wife works in a high-pressure environment and doesn't eat regularly. He is therefore worried that Nicole may be at a higher risk of getting a critical illness. If that's the case, they could have serious financial consequences to deal with, so he wants to purchase an insurance plan that combines critical illness protection and potential return. For the longer term, he wants to have surplus funds to help cover their travel expenses after retirement.

Kenneth takes out an insurance policy for his wife and chooses to pay an annual premium of HKD390,000 for 5 years, with Nicole as the insured and himself as the beneficiary. The plan delivers potential annual return of up to 4% per annum¹, giving them an opportunity at long-term wealth growth. If Nicole is diagnosed with one of the 3 designated critical illnesses including cancer before the age of 80, Kenneth will receive an extra lump-sum payment, up to 3 times. The total benefit could be as high as 150% of total premiums paid (approximately HKD2.93 million), and the policy value will remain unchanged after each benefit payout.

Nicole's insurance policy:

Annual premium	HKD 390,000
Premium payment period	5 years
Potential return	4% ¹
Maximum claim amount	HKD 2,925,000



¹ Potential return is calculated in the policy's 30th year based on the present projected rate of return on investment, including special bonuses. The amount is non-guaranteed and can be higher or lower than those given in the examples. Return levels are for reference only and not guaranteed. Policies' returns vary.

The figures given above are hypothetical and for illustrative purposes only. Please see product brochures and policy provisions for the terms, conditions and exclusions.

The expenses mentioned above that are incurred as a result of Global Medical Care Services are borne by the customer, as are the expenses for air travel, accommodations, convalescence support, etc.

If Nicole is diagnosed with mid- to late-stage colorectal cancer at age 40, whether they have the protection of an insurance plan will make a crucial difference, as illustrated by the following two scenarios:

With the insurance plan described above

Lump-sum payment makes possible more treatment options

- ▶ After Nicole is diagnosed with mid- to late-stage colorectal cancer, Kenneth receives a lump-sum benefit of HKD975,000.
- ▶ This financial resource allows them to consider overseas treatment options.

Global Medical Care Services helps ensure the best treatment

- ▶ They choose to receive treatment in the U.S.
- ▶ And they hope to secure the best treatment for Nicole through the plan's Global Medical Care Services.

Dedicated Personal Care Manager arranges the best possible care

- ▶ Nicole is assigned a dedicated Personal Care Manager, who follows up on diagnosis, reviews and treatment proposals.
- ▶ The manager also arranges doctor-to-doctor video conferences between her doctor in Hong Kong and a team of top U.S. specialists to confirm the diagnosis and propose appropriate treatment plans, making sure Nicole won't miss the best window for treatment due to misdiagnosis.

Insurance company shares the high cost of the U.S. trip

- ▶ Nicole decides to receive proton therapy at a hospital ranked among the top 1% in the U.S., with the chief surgeon (and Harvard Medical School professor) as her attending doctor.

Treatment cost	approx. HKD900,000
Plane tickets and accommodations	approx. HKD 150,000
Total cost	approx. HKD 1,050,000
Lump-sum insurance benefit	approx. HKD975,000
With the insurance benefit, they have to pay just	HKD 75,000

Expensive treatments besides targeted therapy become affordable

- ▶ Since she can afford the latest proton therapy, which has significantly fewer side effects, Nicole doesn't have to rely on large doses of targeted medicines, and makes a steady recovery.

Personal Care Manager provides all-round support and minimises stress

- ▶ Personal Care Manager takes care of all hospital admission procedures and medical appointments.
- ▶ Nicole is accompanied by the Personal Care Manager throughout the treatment process, until she returns home.

They have to pay only HKD75,000

Total premiums (paid over 5 years) approx. HKD1,950,000

- ▶ Policy value remains unchanged after benefit payouts, and has a value of approx. HKD2,096,000 by the 10th policy year.

Without the insurance plan described above

The couple and their families face heavy psychological and financial pressure, with limited medical options

- ▶ The waiting period for treatment at a public hospital is often longer than half a year.
- ▶ They make enquiries at many private hospitals and spend a lot of time comparing treatment plans and charges, an exhausting process.

Paying for expensive treatments in Hong Kong themselves

- ▶ From diagnosis to treatment, the entire process takes 8 months.

Chemotherapy and hospitalisation costs over HKD600,000

- ▶ Without the protection of an insurance policy, Kenneth and Nicole have no choice but to sell their property to cover the medical expenses.

Reliance on targeted medicines increases their financial burden

- ▶ For 9 months after her operation, Nicole needs to take large amounts of targeted medicines for colorectal cancer to keep her condition under control.

Monthly cost of medicines HKD20,000 X 9 months = approx. HKD180,000

Lack of financial support adds to the pressure

- ▶ Rent and the cost of Nicole's medicines become a heavy burden for Kenneth.
- ▶ As a result of these life-changing disruptions, the couple are living under a lot of pressure.

They have to pay HKD780,000

Case 2 → **Dementia**

Mrs. Ho is 55. Her husband passed away a few years ago and she lives with her daughter, who works as a nurse. Since she has friends who are the same age as herself and suffering from dementia, she has come to realise that dementia is a common disease among the elderly in Hong Kong. She worries that if she develops the same condition, she would become a heavy burden to her only daughter, and her way of life would be seriously impacted. She therefore wants an insurance policy that would give her a steady income to help pay for a home caregiver and other necessities in case she has a serious illness.

Mrs. Ho buys an annuity plan that combines savings and dividends. She will be paying an annual premium of HKD1,702,000 for 3 years. She also purchases a dementia rider, which requires no health examination, for which she will pay HKD90,000 in premiums per year. Her daughter is the sole beneficiary of both the standard plan and the dementia rider, giving her daughter comprehensive support in both disease prevention and treatment, and if she passes away.

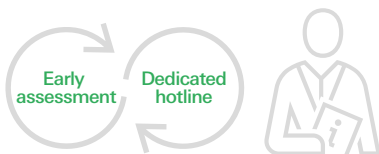
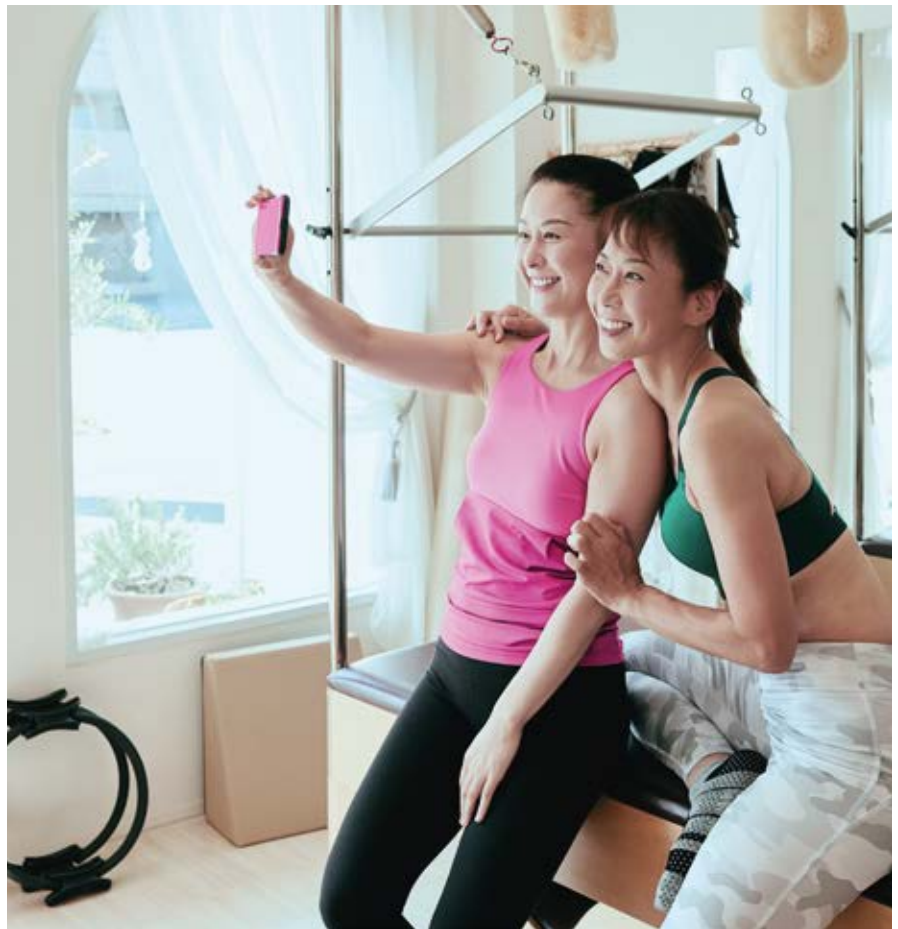
Mrs. Ho’s annuity plan:

Annual premium	HKD 1,792,000
Premium payment period	3 years
Total payment	HKD 5,376,000

1. Prevention

Early assessment - prevention is better than cure

- ▶ ARIA test for assessing Mrs. Ho’s risk of developing dementia.
- ▶ If Mrs. Ho turns out to have a high risk of dementia, she may be referred to a neurologist for further tests at no cost - the MoCA and MMSE tests.
- ▶ These tests can further determine Mrs. Ho’s chances of developing dementia, enabling early preventive measures and treatments.
- ▶ A dedicated hotline for answering Mrs. Ho’s enquiries about elderly health issues and community support.





2. Treatment

Financial support and other services for restoring a normal life

- ▶ Scenario: Mrs. Ho is unfortunately diagnosed with dementia 4 years after purchasing the policy (after the end of the savings period), and her health is in decline.
- ▶ Her daughter will receive a monthly annuity income of HKD27,300 for 20 years, plus a monthly dementia benefit of HKD23,400 until Mrs. Ho passes away, for a monthly total of HKD50,700.
- ▶ If her daughter hires a home caregiver from a private service provider to take care of Mrs. Ho while she is at work, the cost would be approximately HKD30,000 per month.
- ▶ The annuity alleviates the financial burden and allows them to maintain a reasonable quality of life. Both Mrs. Ho and her daughter can enjoy greater peace of mind on her recovery journey.

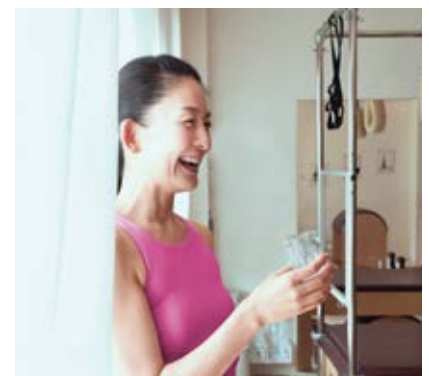
Monthly annuity payment	+ HKD 27,300
Monthly dementia income	+ HKD 23,400
Hiring a home caregiver	- HKD 30,000



3. Unfortunate events

A gift for loved ones

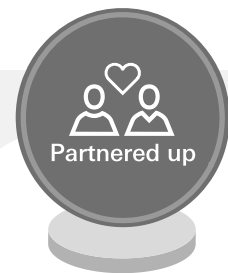
- ▶ If Mrs Ho passes away while the policy is in force, her daughter will receive a lump-sum death benefit, or she can choose to continue receiving the monthly annuities remaining in the standard plan for the remaining annuity period.
- ▶ Extra financial support for loved ones.



Chapter 6:

Protection for different life stages

As we grow older, our health tends to decline, and we become more vulnerable to certain diseases, necessitating a progressively larger reserve for dealing with medical contingencies. That's why the older we get, the more important medical insurance becomes. Different life stages bring different priorities and protection needs. Whether we focus on savings or medical protection, there are many options available. With good planning, we can be prepared for anything, at any life stage.



Start a good career and take care of parents

When you're just starting out on your career and building your future, protection planning might not be a top-of-mind consideration. But if anything were to happen to you, who would care for your parents? Being young means you have a hunger for new experiences and a desire to explore the world. Adequate protection can give you the peace of mind to follow your dreams.

Key protection solutions

· Life protection · Health protection

Other protection options

· Savings · Travel

Start a family

Getting married is a promise to take care of your other half, and that's a major financial commitment. When you're planning for the future, you should think about how you can provide your family with a regular or lump-sum income if you ever get sick or lose the ability to work because of an accident.

Key protection solutions

· Life protection · Health protection

· Savings protection

Other protection options

· Household · Travel

Characteristics of life and health protection plans

Life protection

Whole life protection plans:

Provide a lifetime of life protection and long-term wealth growth potential.

Term life insurance plans:

Provide life protection while the policy is in force; renewal is guaranteed regardless of changes to the insured person's health condition.

Life protection and savings plans:

Long-term life protection with a savings component to help you accumulate your wealth; you will receive the policy's guaranteed cash value upon maturity or policy termination. Higher potential return in the form of non-guaranteed annual dividends is also available.

Universal life insurance plans:

Long-term life protection plans with a savings component. You can adjust the insured amount, premiums and benefits based on your needs, and earn daily interest and potential return on savings.

Health protection

Medical protection plans:

Provide coverage for hospitalisation and surgical expenses, with an extensive medical network that allows you to choose your doctor and hospital for quality medical care.

Critical illness protection plans:

Cover major critical illnesses including cancer, heart disease and stroke. The benefit amount for a major illness in both the cancer group and non-cancer group of diseases can exceed the insured amount, giving even more comprehensive protection.

Additional coverage:

Additional coverage extends to critical illnesses, hospital cash, accidental death, terminal illnesses and unemployment, giving you and your family extra financial support. In the event of total and permanent disability, a disability premium waiver will help alleviate the financial pressure after an accident.



Pave the way to a bright future for your children

The joy of parenthood comes with big responsibilities. With the arrival of a new member of the family, you should be thinking long and hard about your plans: can you give your children the best education? Do you have enough medical protection to shield your family from the unexpected? If anything were to happen to you, would your life protection plan be enough to give them the security they deserve?

Key protection solutions

- Life protection · Health protection
- Education reserve · Savings protection

Other protection options

- Household · Legacy planning

Provide for your loved ones

Other than yourself and your partner, your financial obligations extend to your parents and children as well. As the family's key provider, you have significant financial commitments to live up to. And as your parents grow older, will they need someone to look after them from day to day? Don't forget, you're entering middle age yourself, so safeguarding your own health becomes crucial too.

Key protection solutions

- Life protection · Health protection
- Education reserve · Savings protection

Other protection options

- Household · Legacy planning

Enjoy life, protect your loved ones' future

You've been working hard for so many years, and now it's time to enjoy the good life you have built for yourself. Will you travel the world or do you have other retirement plans? As you grow older, planning your medical protection, retirement income and the transfer of your wealth becomes more important than ever.

Key protection solutions

- Life protection · Health protection
- Annuity plan · Legacy planning

Other protection options

- Household · Travel





There is always a lot more to do, a lot more life to live. And good health is what makes it all possible. So enjoy your long and wonderful life journey by embracing a healthy lifestyle and guarding your world against unexpected illness. And come talk to us at any HSBC branch. We will provide you with a full range of protection options and help you fulfil all your promises to the ones you love.

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