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The Hong Kong Medical Association

FOUNDED IN 1920-INCORPORATED IN 1960 AS A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE
MEMBER OF WORLD MEDICAL ASSOCIATION AND CONFEDERATION OF MEDICAL ASSOCIATIONS IN ASIA & OCEANIA

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2008 - 2009

9 April 2009

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梁周月美女士

Secretariat
Committee on Review of Post-service Outside Work
for Directorate Civil Servants
10/F West Wing Central Government Offices
11 Ice House Street
Hong Kong

Dear Sirs,

Review of Post-Service Outside Work for Directorate Civil Servants

As a representative body of the medical practitioners in Hong Kong, we would like to express our views on the captioned topic, from a professional perspective and with special reference to the medical professionals.

Life expectancy has increased significantly in Hong Kong over the past century, thanks to the continuing improvement in socioeconomic conditions and medical care. The retirement age for civil servants is currently set at 55 to 60. Many of the retired professionals, be they doctors, accountants, lawyers, architects, surveyors, or engineers, are still capable of engaging in highly productive work for a considerable number of years. Indeed, with the experience they have collected over so many years of professional practice, they are valuable assets to the community. It is therefore in the interest of all if they can continue to contribute positively to the advancement of their respective professions and to the betterment of the Hong Kong society as a whole.

We have taken note of the recent incident where there were concerns over potential conflict of interest related to the post-retirement employment of a high-ranking civil servant. However, we are of the view that such exceptional circumstances do not usually apply to most medical professionals being employed by the government. While medical consultants are graded from



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D2 to D4 on the directorate scale within the civil service, they are mainly involved in the clinical care of patients. We therefore see little reason why they should be treated differently from their exact counterparts in the Hospital Authority.

No doubt, conflict of interest may arise from time to time for all public appointments. In a mature social system, reliance should not be placed on an across-the-board prohibition. Instead, there should be a suitable mechanism to deal with the actual risk. We notice that a rather elaborate vetting mechanism is already in place for the approval of post-retirement employment of all directorate civil servants. It is difficult to understand why such an approval process could have gone wrong even in the presence of high-level representation from multiple bureaux. Careful scrutiny of the entire process is called for, as the lessons learned may apply equally to many other situations.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. LO Chi Fung, Ernie
Honorary Secretary

c.c. Dr. the Hon. LEUNG Ka Lau
Legislative Councillor

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