

Points-to-note when offering health check and vaccination

When organising health promotion activities, some community organisations have offered health check or vaccination. Before deciding on whether or how to organise these activities, the organisers should consider carefully various factors, for example the impact of the activities on the target groups, the advantages and disadvantages brought about by such activities, their potential risks, etc.

When offering health check and vaccination, various factors should be considered, for example:

1. Whether the health impact of the activities on the target clients is supported on medical grounds and by evidence;
2. Whether the advantages brought about by the activities would outweigh the disadvantages concerned;
3. Whether they fit the health needs of the target clients;
4. Whether there is sufficient professional medical support for follow-up actions;
5. Sustainability of the activities; and
6. Other issues e.g. legality of the activities, safety of the target clients, etc.

While some examination activities (e.g. blood pressure measurement, osteoporosis assessment, etc.) may appear simple, careful consideration and planning is essential with due attention to issues about the arrangements, e.g. appropriate venue that can ensure privacy should be arranged, and the procedures should be conducted by well-trained people under the supervision of health care professionals, for proper assessment of the clients' health condition and provision of appropriate health advice, such as the limitations as well as potential benefits and harms of the check-up, and the follow up actions required in case of positive test results, etc. As these examinations are of preliminary nature, they should be supported by confirmatory tests and systematic medical services for effective and timely follow up. Otherwise, it may have negative impacts on the target clients.

Certain health check procedures are invasive in nature (e.g. blood sugar or cholesterol testing) and may pose risk to the target clients. Procedures that involve taking blood may result in discomfort like pain or dizziness; wounds may get infected, even blood borne infections may be transmitted in case of improper infection control practices. Clinical waste generated from the procedures should be properly stored and disposed of. Tests that involve laboratory services should be conducted by medical laboratory technologists through doctors' referral.

Another common activity is vaccination. According to the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance (Cap. 138), human-use vaccines (e.g. seasonal influenza vaccines) are prescription medicines. Like other pharmaceutical products, some individuals may not be suitable to receive vaccination or may have allergic reactions. Failure to give timely intervention may result in serious consequences. For the safety of the vaccine recipients, health assessment for the vaccine recipients, including screening for any contraindications or precautions of the vaccine concerned, should be done before vaccine administration. Vaccination activities should be conducted under the supervision of registered medical practitioner and emergency equipment should be readily available at the vaccination venue. Proper infection control measures should be in place for the vaccination activities. Clinical waste generated from the vaccination activity should be properly collected and disposed of in accordance to the Waste Disposal (Clinical Waste) (General) Regulation. Organisers should make reference to the “Guidelines on How to Arrange Vaccination Activities at Non-Clinic Settings” promulgated by the Centre for Health Protection (https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/guidelines_vaccination_nonclinic_eng.pdf)

If the activity involves the provision of medical services by Chinese medicine practitioners or General medical practitioners, irrespective of whether a charge is required, only practitioners registered and practising under relevant ordinances should be invited. Doctors should be registered with the Medical Council of Hong Kong (MCHK), while Chinese medicine practitioners must be registered or listed Chinese medicine practitioners under the Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong (CMCHK). For enquires concerning the qualification of medical practitioners or Chinese medicine practitioners, one can check the name lists on the websites of the MCHK (<http://www.mchk.org.hk/>) or CMCHK (<http://www.cmchk.org.hk/>).

In general, provision of health check or vaccination may not be the expertise of community groups/members. The Department of Health recommends members of the public to consult their family doctors if they are considering a health check. The family doctor can advise on the appropriate tests according to the individual’s needs, so avoiding unnecessary tests and worries. Family doctors can also offer appropriate treatment, counselling or referral according to the findings from the health checks. If, after due considerations, organisers decide to go ahead with these activities, for the safety of the target clients, qualified health care professionals should be arranged for on-site supervision and support to ensure proper arrangement of these activities. Organisers can also consider working with medical institutions in the community for synergistic effects and ensure the safety of clients.