



Issue 01
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Healthlines



THE REAL LIFE
COMPANY



Message from CEO

Being the leading insurer in Hong Kong, I am very pleased to announce the very first issue of our quarterly healthcare e-newsletter *Healthlines*. With the ever increasing medical costs and shortage of healthcare services, medical care in Hong Kong has become a very hot topic. AIA is committed to helping you live a longer, healthier and better life. Through *Healthlines*, we hope to bring you and the public information of the latest developments in healthcare, government initiatives, as well as smart tips for health.

Dr York Chow, who has joined us as AIA Hong Kong and Macau Chief Medical Officer and Corporate Advisor, will liaise with our medical providers. With his professional knowledge and rich experience, we are sure to provide the best quality medical service to you.



Jacky Chan
CEO
AIA Hong Kong
& Macau



Medical Inflation and Your Premiums

Medical insurance, like any other types of insurance, operates under the principle of risk sharing. The premium is a contribution to an insurance pool and any claims from the customer will be withdrawn from the pool. Insurance company, as the custodian and administrator of the pool, has to ensure that all claims paid follow the medically necessary and reasonable principle. If the principle is violated, and result in excessive claims, we will see an unneeded increase in medical costs and all customers will suffer from unnecessary premium increase.

We have been deeply concerned about soaring medical costs in Hong Kong over the past few years. Compared to global figures¹, medical inflation in Hong Kong was 8-10% annually on average over the past 5 years, higher than the 6-9% for the Asia Pacific region and much higher than the 5-6% in Europe. If the current rate of medical inflation remains unchecked, insurance premiums may rise to a level that is not affordable for many.

The 2013 "Consultancy Study for the Health Protection Scheme Report²" from PricewaterhouseCoopers cited the growing number of in hospital surgical procedures, (which should have been performed at day surgery centres) as one of the key reasons for soaring medical costs. This means patients with more serious illness have to "fight for" hospital beds with patients that actually do not require a stay in hospital. The shortage of hospital beds also drives up medical costs.

Hong Kong people have the longest life expectancy in the world³. Ageing population and increased need for medical care adds fuel to the city's skyrocketing medical costs. As a responsible insurance company, we feel it is our obligation on behalf of our customers to work closely with the various parties of our community, in particular the medical profession, to address the challenge of medical inflation. It is imperative that all parties work hand in hand to ensure that patients with most critical medical needs have access to hospital beds.

¹ Willis Tower Watsons Global Medical Trends Survey Report 2016, 2014, 2012

² Consultancy Study for the Health Protection Scheme Report by PricewaterhouseCoopers, 12 December 2013.

³ Original Source in "State of World Population 2016" of United Nations Population Fund:
http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/The_State_of_World_Population_2016_-_English.pdf



Safe and Time-Saving – Day Surgery

Gastroscopy, colonoscopy and cataract removal are the most common types of day surgeries in Hong Kong. With no admission procedure required, patients can benefit from a comparably efficient and safe alternative to inpatient surgery.

Day surgery has become very common in western countries and Southeast Asia, and is even more so in America and Singapore, where 90% of endoscopy procedures take place at day surgery centres. In these days when medical expenses are soaring, the choice of safe and affordable day surgery would alleviate one's economic burden.

Taking gastroscopy as an example, an inpatient surgery costs on average HK\$21,000, but only HK\$5,500 as day surgery¹. A gastroscopic examination can usually be completed in approximately 5 to 10 minutes. There is no need to stay overnight in the hospital, nor is general anesthesia necessary in most cases.

Specialist clinics and day surgery centres for day surgeries must abide by safety standards no less stringent than those of hospitals. If patients can find a trusted doctor and day surgery centre to undergo treatment as soon as possible, they will find the surgical procedure not only easier and faster but also more relaxing than they have imagined.

¹ AIA 2015 internal reference data (Average total bill amount for ward level)

Meeting Our Network Doctor

H: Healthlines
N: Dr Ng

H: What kinds of procedures can be performed in day surgery centres?

N: Gastroscopy and colonoscopy are considered simple surgeries and more than half of the cases can be performed in day surgery centres. However, for major operations (e.g. heart valve replacement), emergency cases, older patients and patients with other illnesses, doctors may arrange for hospitalisation depending on the situation.



H: Is it more comfortable to receive an operation in hospital than in day surgery centres?

N: Many patients have reflected that their experience in day surgery centres felt largely the same as in hospitals. In addition, many day surgery centres are very well-equipped to offer patients a safe and comfortable experience.

H: What is most important when serving patients?

N: Doctors often do not have too much time to communicate with patients, which is why we should be more attentive when listening to their needs, so that they can receive treatment with peace of mind.

H: What kind of health suggestions would you give to our customers?

N: Being mindful of what we eat is the key to a healthy body, e.g. consume less cured food such as sausages and luncheon meat.



Dr Ng Ka Yan, Calvin
Specialist in Gastroenterology and Hepatology; AIA's Network Doctor



Dr. York Chow's Column - How to Best Use Your Health Insurance?

We have always heard about the importance of health insurance, but how much do you know about its real value? Is it simply compensations for doctors' consultation fees? What is the best way to use our policy?

Why Do We Need Health Insurance?

Buying health insurance is a foresighted action to protect us and our beloved. The concept of insurance is to form a risk pool in which we share the costs and potential losses with other insured members. We all know we will get sick but none of us are able to forecast how and when we will be suffering in illnesses. The increasing medical costs give us a heavy economic burden. Without proper health insurance, illnesses or accidents could wipe us out financially and put us and our families in debt for years.



Why Does Health Insurance Become Costly?

Compared with the past decades, today's health insurance products are more comprehensive and provide wider coverage, but the premiums have been raised consistently every year. While we are enjoying medical services of a higher quality, we are also paying higher prices because of the rapid increase in healthcare costs, particularly in private services, new medical practices and new technologies.

To ensure the best utilisation of our pooled resources, we need to treat our fellow members as a big family and use our healthcare services appropriately and wisely.

Fundamentally, staying healthy and reducing illnesses are the best approaches for a quality life. When we get sick, we should always seek early the most appropriate treatments. It is essential to choose a caring and skillful doctor who charges reasonable fees, and build up a stable and mutually trusting doctor-patient relationship. We can also enhance our healthcare knowledge by visiting creditable local and overseas websites for reliable medical information:

- Government of Hong Kong – www.gov.hk
- Hospital Authority – www.ha.org.hk
- Hong Kong Academy of Medicine and colleges – www.hkam.org.hk
- Medline Plus – Medical Encyclopaedia (NIH Library) – <https://medlineplus.gov>
- Mayo Clinic – www.mayoclinic.org
- NHS Choice – www.nhs.uk

How to Choose the Best Approaches?

Due to cultural differences between countries, it would be wise to visit more than one source to gain a fuller picture of the topic required.

Understanding the Healthcare Process

Doctors need to carry out proper steps to care for patients. Taking a detailed clinical history and a thorough physical examination is a must. Making a diagnosis might require additional investigations and tests, including blood and urine tests, and tests by imaging techniques.

Doctors should explain to patients regarding the diagnosis (and possible alternatives), the appropriate treatments and treatment options, the prognosis with the likely outcome of the episode, and the required aftercare.

Considerations

Professional doctors are trained to be patient-centred, honest and trustworthy. They also need to observe the Code of Practice, putting patients' benefits and outcomes as their first consideration, which includes protecting patients' privacy and personal information.

Alert When Being Advised

Doctors are also trained to be compassionate, to provide care with empathy, and to offer professional and objective judgement and advice. Most doctors and health practitioners in Hong Kong are well-trained and professional. There are, however, rare occasions that one might encounter exceptions. We need to beware when doctors :

- Behave apathetically / impatiently
- Provide illogical, irrelevant or evasive explanation of diagnosis and treatment
- Obviously do not possess enough experience or training to practise a specific procedure advised be taken
- Advise immediate admission or emergency surgery before a proper diagnosis or without giving sound explanation
- Advise additional investigation or treatment, or refer patients to other specialists after knowing they are protected by insurance
- Charge unreasonable fees

It would be advisable to seek a second opinion if you cannot establish trust with your doctor.



Dr York Chow

Chief Medical Officer
and Corporate Advisor,
AIA Hong Kong and
Macau



➔ Voluntary Health Insurance Scheme – What Does It Matter to You?

Hong Kong, similar to all developed markets, is suffering from high medical inflation and a shortage of medical service supply. The Hong Kong government considers it is necessary to strike a balance between public and private medical services, so as to relieve the pressure on the public sector. This should ultimately help to maintain a long-term sustainable healthcare system. Following a prolonged and extensive period of public consultation on healthcare reform in Hong Kong, the government has come up with the “Voluntary Health Insurance Scheme” (VHIS).



The aim of the VHIS is to reduce the current stress within the public healthcare system by encouraging the middle class to switch to the private sector. Through regulating and improving the quality of hospital insurance products, the public sector can concentrate on providing services within its own target areas. To encourage this, the government plans to offer tax incentives for people who purchase VHIS-compliant insurance products. However, this is still under discussion and will require acceptance from the Legislative Council.

Know more about VHIS: <http://www.vhis.gov.hk/en/home/index.html>

➔ Hotline Services

To bring you more peace of mind, we have arranged the following hotlines with services include:

- making enquiries on cashless hospitalisation
- helping you understand the relevant coverage on hospitalisation and medical expenses
- network specialist doctor appointment service



Hong Kong hotline: (852) 2232-8888 (after selecting the language used, please press #2 and then 2)
Hong Kong mobile: *1299 (after selecting the language used, please press 2 and then 7)
PRC toll-free hotline: 4008-428-013
Macau hotline: (853) 8988-1822

We encourage you to call our hotline before undergoing a medical procedure, so as to make enquiries on the scope of coverage regarding the forthcoming treatment and arrange pre-approval on the eligibility of the claim and estimated claim amount. By doing so, you can have a more accurate grasp and effective plan of your treatment option and focus on receiving treatment without bothering about payment and claim procedures.



AIA x Medix: Personal Medical Case Management Service



An exclusive service to AIA high-end medical plan customers, the Personal Medical Case Management service provided by Medix*, helps you get the most appropriate diagnosis and treatment. You can leverage on the global experience of Medix to tackle critical illnesses and rare conditions. Medix also handles paediatric, orthopaedic and many non-emergency cases.

This service is supported by Medix' 300 in-house specialists and their quality-accredited global network over 3,000 leading specialists from the USA, Israel and foremost European countries. It offers a third-party and multi-disciplinary opinion on medical conditions along with ongoing support for at least 3 months. You can ask Medix

to work with your attending doctor directly at any stage to advise you on the optimal and most efficient treatment option, so as to avoid unnecessary and invasive tests and treatment. According to Medix' global experience, around 20% of cases had a change in diagnosis and 43% were recommended an alternative treatment.

Since its launch in July 2016, more than 170 AIA customers have already used and benefited from this service. Being the first insurance company in Hong Kong to offer such a service, we have been recognised by the Hong Kong Association for Customer Service Excellence and was honoured with the Bronze Award for Service Innovation in 2016.

For application of service, eligible customers can call our hotline (852) 2232-8820 or Medix' customer hotline (852) 3896-0500. Please visit our website for important information and patients' testimonials about this service www.aia.com.hk/medix

* Medix is an independent third-party company which specialises in Personal Medical Case Management

- ¹ AIA shall not be responsible or liable for any medical service, product and solicitation effort provided by Medix, which are not sold or marketed by AIA. Provisions of service may be subject to certain terms and conditions of Medix.
- ² The above statistics and information have been verified by Medix only.
- ³ Please contact Medix for full details of the scope of the service.

AIA iCare Self-Help Service Kiosk



Pioneering in the Hong Kong insurance industry, we have recently launched the industry's first "AIA iCare Self-Help Service Kiosk". It is a breakthrough in digital innovation for us. The kiosk provides comprehensive information and services for individual insurance customers which include: e-form downloads, general policy enquiries, claim guidelines and procedures. You can also receive immediate assistance through interactive live chats with our Service Ambassadors. iCare does not only speed up the claim process, but also provides you with user-friendly, prompt and efficient customer support.

The first "AIA iCare Self-Help Service Kiosk" is already in service at one of AIA's Premier Medical Providers – "New Medical Centre". It will be rolled out in more medical centres and private hospitals within this year, so more customers can access this innovative service.

Coming up, we will enhance the service to include e-form and claim submissions as well. We hope to bring you a quality experience all the time.

