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Hong Kong government to develop rare disease centre

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To be situated in Hong Kong Children's Hospital



Professor Chung-mau Lo, Secretary for Health, has said that Hong Kong is developing a rare disease centre in collaboration with the Mainland. The centre will be situated in Hong Kong Children's Hospital where there are specialist genetic disease experts.

He mentioned that the Mainland bureaus and departments recently facilitated the smooth delivery of a cord blood haematopoietic stem cell unit from the Mainland to Hong Kong for the treatment of a five-year-old girl suffering from thalassaemia.

In the past, the only treatment for thalassaemia patients was blood transfusions every month or so with iron chelation therapy, but many patients could only live to 20 or 30 years of age, Prof Lo explained.

“With stem cell transplant therapy, the disease will be cured with the objective that patients would not need a blood transfusion anymore, so they would be able to return to their normal life”, he said.

Prof Lo noted that stem cell transplant therapy, cell therapy such as chimeric antigen receptor T-cell therapy and genetic therapy, are the objectives of Hong Kong's future development as a medical innovation hub.

“Hopefully in the future, children with diseases which are genetically-related or extreme diseases like cancer, and those who require cardiovascular surgeries or neurosurgeries, will be given the best of care in Hong Kong Children's Hospital,” he added.