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(Activity 3: Pair discussion and individual written report on Health Vouchers Scheme vs Half Medical Charges)

Source I

The Chief Executive proposed to launch a three-year trial scheme of Health Care Vouchers Scheme for the Elderly in his Policy Address in October 2007.

The Scheme has the following features:

- a. All persons aged 70 or above will be given annually five health care vouchers worth \$50 each.
- b. The vouchers can be used for western and Chinese private practitioners, dental services, preventive services (e.g. medical examination and vaccination) and therapeutic services.
- c. Users can use the vouchers by showing the identity cards. Medical practitioners will deduct the number of voucher used through a central internet system. Users cannot get the change for cash and need to pay the outstanding balance.
- d. Users can use any number of vouchers in one service, or leave them for next year. But they cannot use the vouchers in advance.

Source II

Charges for different medical services:

- a. Charge of public clinic is \$45.
- b. Charge of private (western) clinic ranges from \$180 to \$250.
- c. Charge of private (Chinese medicine) clinic ranges from \$15 to \$100.

Source III

Reduction of medical charges for the elderly at public hospitals:

Hundreds of the elderly marched to the Government Offices and asked for a cut of medical charges for the elderly at public hospitals with a slogan: "Charges by half – Happiness doubled for Elderly" (Suppose they ask for a 50% cut of medical charges at public clinics)

Sources:

1. 2007-08 Policy Address,
2. Ming Pao, 25 June,2007

The task:

Suppose the Hong Kong Government would spend HK\$5 million on either one of the schemes (i.e. Health Vouchers Scheme and Half Medical Charges). Compare these two schemes in regard to the efficient use of scarce medical resources and equalising income distribution.