

Preface

As I am a clinician-scientist rather than a social scientist, this book, *A Medical History of Hong Kong*, will invariably differ somewhat from other accounts of Hong Kong written by historians. In two volumes, it presents a broad, sweeping view of the development and evolution of medical and health services in Hong Kong in the context of its historical, social, cultural, political, and economic circumstances. My hope is that this work will serve as an impetus for others to do further research in this field, starting from any one of its inviting entry points.

The first volume gives an account of Hong Kong's medical and health development from its establishment as a British colony in 1842 to the beginning of the Second World War. The second volume, which carries on from that point to 2015, investigates how medical and health services grew and adapted as Hong Kong's political and the socioeconomic landscape—and the world beyond it—changed, and continued changing. It does not explore the social philosophies of medicine, the economics of healthcare financing, or the healthcare policy of Hong Kong as other books have ably done. Among them are J. Hay's *Health Care in Hong Kong: An Economic Policy Assessment*; R. Gauld and D. Gould's *The Hong Kong Health Sector: Development and Change*; and G. Leung and J. Bacon-Shone's *Hong Kong's Health System: Reflections, Perspectives and Visions*.

Thoughtful observers and students of Hong Kong medicine will find in these pages the map of the city that has been pulled at and stepped on, and yet risen again. In their inquiries, they would do well to look backwards as well as forwards; to know where we are going, we must also know where we came from. Hence, Chapter 1 of the second volume introduces the political, social, economic, and medical landscape of Hong Kong since the Second World War. Chapter 2 begins with the description of the lack of medical services for the population, prisoners-of-war camps, and Stanley camp for foreign civilians during the brutal Japanese occupation.

Chapter 3 and 4 relate the story of the valiant efforts of the Medical and Health Department and the people of Hong Kong in successfully combatting the infectious diseases and infections that overwhelmed the poverty-stricken, overcrowded postwar conditions. The following two chapters, 5 and 6, describe the inevitable fallout from improved standards of living, as Hong Kong evolved into a high-income region—the rise of non-communicable chronic diseases such as cancers, heart diseases, cerebrovascular diseases, diabetes, and obesity, and how the medical profession and Hong Kong citizenry coped with the situation. Chapters 7 and 8 discuss Hong Kong's preparedness for medical and health emergencies such as outbreaks of emerging infectious diseases and issues associated with an aging population—challenges confronted by Western countries.

Chapters 9 through 12 document medical education and changes in health-services delivery and healthcare reform in Hong Kong—efforts of the government to deal with the constantly changing socioeconomic and demographic landscape. Although Hong Kong has no long-term healthcare policy, the medical and health development since the 1970s had been guided by the principle that no citizen should be denied medical care for lack of means. The establishment of the Hospital Authority placed Hong Kong's hospital care at par with those of countries with advanced economies. However, the rising demands for high-technology, advanced treatment, new expensive drugs, and the health needs of an ever increasing, aging population threaten the financial sustainability of the current healthcare system. The last two chapters cover the progress of healthcare reform in Hong Kong with emphasis on primary care, disease prevention, and health promotion, together with the development and modernization of traditional Chinese medicine.

The chapters recount key events in the medical history of Hong Kong as its status toggled from a British colony to an occupied territory under Japanese administration, back to a British colony, and finally to a Special Administrative Region of China. Because the chapters are arranged by theme, there is chronological overlap. Between them, they tell a story of medical and health services in Hong Kong.

This book draws on a wide array of archival materials, government publications, scholarly literature, newspapers, and multiple websites. A detailed breakdown can be found in Bibliography.