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HKSH MEDICAL GROUP

For Immediate Release

**HKSH Village Volunteers Raised HK\$500,000 to Sponsor Rheumatic Patients to Join Hydrotherapy and Physiotherapy Programme**

(18 March 2025, Hong Kong) Nearly 300 staff members and friends of HKSH Medical Group (HKSH) joined forces to participate in the 17th “Walk for a Vision” event organised by HKSH Village Volunteers on 16 March and successfully raised HK\$500,000 for Hong Kong Arthritis & Rheumatism Foundation (HKARF). The fund raised will be utilised to sponsor over 800 patients with arthritis and rheumatic diseases to receive hydrotherapy and physiotherapy through HKARF’s “Empower Rheumatic Patients With Every Step!” programme, which aims to relieve their joint pain, improve their physical and psychological well-being, and enhance their overall quality of life.

**Dr. Joseph CHAN, Chief Medical Officer of HKSH Medical Group, Deputy Medical Superintendent of Hong Kong Sanatorium & Hospital, and Chief Volunteer Leader of HKSH Village Volunteers**, said, “This year marks the 17<sup>th</sup> edition of the “Walk for a Vision” event organised by HKSH Village Volunteers. As healthcare professionals, our mission goes beyond saving lives. We are committed to going the extra mile, using our medical expertise to give back to the society and cast a meaningful impact. Over the past 16 years, we have raised more than HK\$8.8 million, supporting various communities in need, including individuals with epilepsy, Parkinson’s disease, visual impairment, intellectual disabilities as well as children battling with emotional distress or cancer. This year, HKSH Village Volunteers has selected HKARF as the beneficiary organisation of the event and the funds raised will be used to sponsor rheumatic patients to receive hydrotherapy and physiotherapy so as to improve their physical and mental health. We also hope to raise public awareness and understanding of rheumatic diseases through this meaningful cause.”

**Dr. Gavin LEE, Chairman of Hong Kong Arthritis & Rheumatism Foundation and Director of HKSH Rheumatology Centre**, is grateful for the generous support of HKSH Village Volunteers. He said, “HKARF has been committed to enhancing public awareness of common rheumatic and arthritic diseases in Hong Kong. By offering medication financial assistance, hydrotherapy and exercise programmes, as well as psychological support, we strive to improve the quality of life of rheumatic patients. Among these initiatives, the hydrotherapy and physiotherapy programmes conducted by registered physiotherapists have been particularly popular because they do not only help patients strengthen joint and muscle functions and alleviate rheumatic symptoms, but also provide a platform for participants to connect with fellow patients. These group sessions foster a supportive community to help participants gain confidence and manage their illness with a positive mindset.”

**Dr. YIM Cheuk-wan, Chairman of Patients Support Committee, Hong Kong Arthritis & Rheumatism Foundation**, said, “The proceeds from this fundraising walk will support rheumatic patients to continue joining water and land exercise programmes in the coming year. These programmes have been highly effective in relieving pain, enhancing physical fitness, and improving psychological well-being, empowering patients to take a more holistic approach to managing their conditions.”

**Dr. Tommy CHEUNG, Specialist in Rheumatology, HKSH Rheumatology Centre**, said, “There are numerous misconceptions about rheumatic and arthritic diseases among the public, such as the myth that these diseases only affect the elderly. Rheumatic diseases are autoimmune disorders that often develop in individuals from young adulthood to middle age. One of the most common conditions in Hong Kong is rheumatoid arthritis, where inflammation could affect different joints in the body, leading to progressive bone erosion and joint deformity. Over time, this can result in joint destruction, causing not only persistent pain but also significant

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mobility impairment, ultimately resulting in irreversible damage to overall health and quality of life. Current treatment methods primarily involve medication or surgery to manage inflammation and prevent further deterioration of joints. Physiotherapy and regular exercise also play a crucial role in helping patients maintain their overall health and mobility.”

### **Patient Sharing**

Ms. Lee is one of the beneficiaries of HKARF’s “Empower Rheumatic Patients With Every Step!” programme. She sought medical treatment for hip joint issues years ago but despite undergoing extensive medication and surgical treatment, her pain still persisted requiring long-term bedrest. With no sight of a full recovery and not knowing when she could reunite with her family, she experienced severe emotional distress. Ms. Lee then consulted another orthopaedist who finally diagnosed her with ankylosing spondylitis after thorough examinations and blood tests. Subsequent to a hip replacement surgery, Ms. Lee gradually regained her health and a normal life. As her condition improved, Ms. Lee began joining HKARF’s exercise courses, where physiotherapists tailored individual training exercises according to each patient’s physical condition. This personalised approach allowed participants to progress at their own pace and level while effectively strengthening their muscles. Through sharing experiences and encouragement with fellow patients of the programme, Ms. Lee gradually became more optimistic and confident. She also developed a regular exercise routine, which has played a crucial role in managing her condition and enhancing her quality of life. Now, she is thrilled to see that this fundraising walk will help support more individuals facing similar challenges.

### **About Rheumatic and Arthritic Diseases**

Rheumatic and arthritic diseases refer to a broad category of over 150 conditions that affect the bones, joints, and surrounding soft tissues. While the clinical manifestation of these disorders can vary, most patients typically present with joint pain as a primary symptom. Studies indicate that the prevalence of rheumatoid arthritis is 0.35%, while ankylosing spondylitis stands at 0.26%. It is estimated that over 45,000 patients in Hong Kong are affected by these conditions. Rheumatic and arthritic diseases predominantly affect individuals from young adulthood to middle age, with women being approximately three times more likely to develop these conditions than men. For example, systemic lupus erythematosus is more common in women aged 20 to 50, while rheumatoid arthritis is more common among individuals aged 30 to 50. Conditions such as vasculitis and gout typically emerge in middle-aged individuals. Additionally, children are also susceptible to rheumatic and arthritic diseases, with common paediatric conditions including juvenile idiopathic arthritis and Kawasaki disease.

### **About “Walk for a Vision” and HKSH’s Charity Medical Works**

“Walk For A Vision” is an annual charity event organised by HKSH Village Volunteers since 2009, with the aim of supporting various health and medical-related initiatives. Beneficiary organisations include Children’s Thalassaemia Foundation, Families of Spinal Muscular Atrophy Charitable Trust, Children’s Cancer Foundation, St. James’ Settlement, Ronald McDonald House Charities Hong Kong, Ebenezer School and Home for the Visually Impaired, Sweet Home Psychological Wellness Centre, among others. The 8-km walkathon route began at the Hong Kong Sanatorium & Hospital and passed through Sing Woo Road, Tai Hang Road, Wong Nai Chung Gap Road, and Violet Hill hilltop before concluding back at the Hospital. This year’s event received generous donations from platinum sponsor **FWD Hong Kong**, and gold sponsor **Siemens Healthineers**. In addition, **Olympus Hong Kong and China Limited**, **Roche Diagnostics (Hong Kong) Limited**, **Walk The World**, **Metro Radio** and **Hong Kong Sanatorium & Hospital Nurses Alumni Association** are also supporting organisations of the walkathon.

Over the years, HKSH has actively fulfilled its corporate social responsibility through different forms of charitable medical services and activities. In recent years, HKSH has also collaborated with different

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foundations to subsidise patients with financial needs to receive medical services at HKSH. For instance, HKSH has been supported by Li Ka Shing Foundation and Chau Hoi Shuen Foundation since 2018 and 2023 respectively, and has successively launched the “Transcatheter Cardiovascular Interventions Subsidy Scheme” and “Women’s Heart Health Subsidy Scheme” to subsidise those in need to receive examinations and treatments. After HKSH’s introduction of the first proton therapy system in the Greater Bay Area, Mr. Li Ka Shing generously sponsored several paediatric cancer patients referred by the Hong Kong Children’s Hospital to receive proton therapy with minimal side effects. HKSH is dedicated to collaborating with authorities and generous donors within the community to ensure that patients in need can receive timely and appropriate medical care.

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#### **About HKSH Medical Group**

Officially launched in September 2017, HKSH Medical Group, through its operating members, adopts a multi-faceted, coordinated approach to promote public health and advanced medicine through relentless efforts in clinical excellence, medical training and research as well as public health education. Members of the HKSH Medical Group include Hong Kong Sanatorium & Hospital, HKSH Healthcare, HKSH Eastern Medical Centre and HKSH Cancer Centre. All members are dedicated to providing quality care to patients.

#### **About Hong Kong Sanatorium & Hospital**

Hong Kong Sanatorium & Hospital, established in 1922, is one of the leading private hospitals in Hong Kong. Living up to its motto of “Quality in Service Excellence in Care,” the Hospital is committed to serving the public as well as promoting medical education and research.

#### **About HKSH Village Volunteers**

Established in April 2009 and became an approved charitable organisation in July 2018, HKSH Village Volunteers, which consists of HKSH staff members, doctors, nurses, nursing students, alumni of the School of Nursing and retired staff, has taken part in various community and fundraising activities to promote the health and wellness of people in Hong Kong through care and love. Two main fundraising events are the annual “Walk For A Vision” and “HKSH Christmas Party in Benefit of OSC”. In recent years, more volunteer programmes and services have been developed, i.e., “HKSH Health Buddies”, “HKSH Health Talks”, “HKSH Caring Friends”, “HKSH Trekkers”, and “Village Green Rangers”.

#### **About Hong Kong Arthritis & Rheumatism Foundation (HKARF)**

HKARF was established in October 2001 by Professor LAU Chak Sing, the Vice-President & Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Health) (Interim) and Dean of Medicine at The University of Hong Kong. It is a government-recognised charity aimed at improving the health and quality of life of patients with rheumatic diseases. Its goals include raising public awareness and concern regarding common arthritis and rheumatic diseases. HKARF’s main work includes: providing discounts on high-cost medications for rheumatic patients in need and offering psychosocial support through the rheumatic buddy helpline; offering hydrotherapy and exercise classes

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led by qualified physiotherapists, and therapeutic ceramics and Nagomi classes guided by certified instructors; promoting collaboration among rheumatology professionals to research the treatment of rheumatic diseases and the needs of patients; organising health talks to help rheumatic patients manage their conditions more effectively.

#### Photo Captions:

1. Organised by HKSH Village Volunteers, the kick-off ceremony of the “Walk For A Vision” is officiated by Dr. Walton LI, Chief Executive Officer of HKSH Medical Group and Medical Superintendent of Hong Kong Sanatorium & Hospital (sixth from left); Professor LAU Chak-sing, Dean of Medicine at The University of Hong Kong, Honorary President of Hong Kong Arthritis & Rheumatism Foundation, and Co-Chairperson of Clinical Governance Committee, HKSH Medical Group (seventh from left); Dr. Joseph CHAN, Chief Medical Officer of HKSH Medical Group, Deputy Medical Superintendent of Hong Kong Sanatorium & Hospital and Chief Volunteer Leader of HKSH Village Volunteers (eighth from left); Dr. Gavin LEE, Chairman of Hong Kong Arthritis & Rheumatism Foundation and Director of HKSH Rheumatology Centre (tenth from left) and members of Clinical Governance Committee and Hospital Management Committee of HKSH.



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2. Dr. Joseph CHAN, Chief Medical Officer of HKSH Medical Group, Deputy Medical Superintendent of Hong Kong Sanatorium & Hospital and Chief Volunteer Leader of HKSH Village Volunteers (third from left), together with Ms. LOK Wai Kwan (second from left) and Ms. Sammi TSUI (first from left), Sub Group Leaders of HKSH Village Volunteers, presents the cheque of pledged donation of HK\$500,000 to Dr. Gavin LEE, Chairman of Hong Kong Arthritis & Rheumatism Foundation and Director of HKSH Rheumatology Centre (third from right), Mr. CHAN Kar Lok Thomas (second from right) and Dr. TO Chi Hung (first from right), Vice-Chairmen of Hong Kong Arthritis & Rheumatism Foundation.



3. The fund raised will be utilised to sponsor patients with arthritis and rheumatic diseases to receive hydrotherapy and physiotherapy to improve their physical and psychological well-being, and enhance their overall quality of life. Additionally, the walkathon aims to raise public awareness and understanding of rheumatic diseases.





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4. Dr. Tommy CHEUNG, Specialist in Rheumatology, HKSH Rheumatology Centre (second from left) and Dr. YIM Cheuk-wan, Chairman of Patients Support Committee, Hong Kong Arthritis & Rheumatism Foundation (first from right) provided insights into arthritis and rheumatic diseases and explained how hydrotherapy and physiotherapy can enhance patients' physical and mental well-being. Ms. Lee, a beneficiary (second from right), also shared her personal journey so that the public can better understand the needs of rheumatology patients.



5. Addressing at the kick off ceremony, Dr. Joseph CHAN, Chief Medical Officer of HKSH Medical Group, Deputy Medical Superintendent of Hong Kong Sanatorium & Hospital and Chief Volunteer Leader of HKSH Village Volunteers, said HKSH has consistently encouraged its staff to serve the community through medical charity services.



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