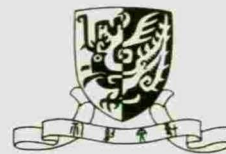


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### CHINESE UNIVERSITY OPENS WORLD'S FIRST MULTI-FUNCTION SKIN BANK

The Chinese University of Hong Kong announced at a press conference the official opening of the world's first multi-function Skin Bank at the Burns Unit of the Prince of Wales Hospital to provide the much needed technologically advanced treatment to patients with burn injuries.

Professor Arthur Li Kwok Cheung, Chairman of the Department of Surgery and Dean, Faculty of Medicine of the Chinese University of Hong Kong stated that the opening of the Hong Kong Skin Bank culminates efforts by the Department of Surgery, the Chinese University of Hong Kong over the past one year to raise funds to organize the first skin bank in Hong Kong to provide advanced treatment to burns patients.

The formation of the Hong Kong Skin Bank is made possible by strong public support, and in particular through the generous donation of one million Hong Kong dollars by the Oriental Press Charitable Fund Association and the Li Tam Doy Hing Burns Foundation together with the support of the Hospital Authority. The goal of the Hong Kong Skin Bank is to provide the most advanced treatment to burns patients while at the same time to continue to undertake burns research to further improve the treatment results of burns patients.

Professor Arthur Li went on to receive a donation of Hong Kong one million dollars from Mr. Ricky Ma, President of the Oriental Press Charitable Fund Association. The donation was made toward the purchase of equipment required for the establishment of the Hong Kong Skin Bank.

Speaking at the Opening Ceremony of the Hong Kong Skin Bank, Mrs Elizabeth Wong, Secretary for Health and Welfare stated that the Hong Kong Skin Bank of the Prince of Wales Hospital as organized by the Department of Surgery, Chinese University of Hong Kong represented the fruition of joint cooperative efforts between the Oriental Press Charitable Fund Association, the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Hospital Authority. It is an excellent example of how the medical professionals, private entrepreneurs and the government can together achieve a worthwhile goal for the benefit of the community.



Mrs Wong stated that approximately 9,000 patients with burn injuries were being treated every year in the Accident and Emergency Department of seven major Hospital Authority Hospitals in Hong Kong. Of these 9,000 patients, 2,000 were children and 7,000 were adults.\* The most common cause of burns was by scalding followed by flame, chemical and electrical burns. In adults, two third of burn injuries were related to industrial accident while 93% of children sustained domestic burns injuries.

Moreover, according to a recent study conducted at the Prince of Wales Hospital, of the 250 burns patients admitted each year to the Burns Unit, 68% were scald burns and 19% were flame burns. Burns injury occurring at home and at play accounted for nearly 80% of all burns admissions and 45% of all burns admissions involved children under the age of six. Furthermore, 63% of all scald burns occurred in children under the age of six. Of all burns admissions to PWH, 9% (22 patients per year) were extensive burns involving more than 20% of the total body surface area, while 28% involved the extremities. This pattern of burns injuries calls for a comprehensive burns treatment and prevention program to reduce potentially disabling and disfiguring as well as life threatening domestic scald and other types of burns injury occurring in infants and children.

Mrs Wong went on to state that the Burns Unit of the Prince of Wales Hospital has made remarkable achievements over the past years. The clinical application of cultured human skin prepared in the Lee Hysan Laboratory was successfully carried out by this Burns Unit in March 1991, a first for Hong Kong and the South East Asia region. No doubt, cultured skin and the use of fresh pigskin for temporary burns wound coverage will help to improve the chance of recovery of some burns patients. She was delighted that the work of the Chinese University of Hong Kong with cultured skin and fresh pigskin has recently been recognised internationally as innovative and their work was broadcasted by the well-known Australian TV series "Beyond 2000" in different languages in over 78 countries in the world.

According to Dr. Walter King Wing Keung, Chief of the Burns Unit at the Prince of Wales Hospital, The Hong Kong Skin Bank is believed to be the world's first comprehensive and multi-purpose skin bank designed to carry out three major inter-related functions:

\*[In 1987-88, the figures for different hospitals were as follow: Prince of Wales Hospital: 367 children, 724 adults; Queen Mary Hospital: 197 children, 570 adults; Princess Margaret Hospital: 252 children, 854 adults; Queen Elizabeth Hospital: 300 children, 1300 adults; United Christian Hospital: 333 children, 985 adults; Caritas Medical Centre: 147 children, 449 adults; Tang Siu Kin Hospital: 225 children, 1729 adults.]

The first function is to provide frozen pigskin or donated cadaver skin to cover the burn wound temporarily; the second function is to provide cultured skin (human epidermal cells) to cover the wound permanently, and, the third function is to make and process biosynthetic skin or human skin substitute to cover the burn wound. This unique Hong Kong Skin Bank, therefore, consists of three subdivisions or sections which are all housed under one roof. The Cryostorage Section has a computerized programmable freezer which gradually freezes pigskin or cadaveric skin down to -196°C for long term storage in a liquid nitrogen container. Fresh pigskin is extremely useful in promoting the healing of burn wounds. The Cultured Skin Section has a laminar flow hood and a carbon dioxide incubator which permit the cultivation and propagation of skin cells to cover burn wounds in patients with extensive burns. The combined use of fresh pigskin and cultured skin in burns treatment by this Burn Unit in 1991 constituted a major breakthrough in the treatment of burns. The Biosynthetic Skin Section provides updated technology to make and process biosynthetic skin or human skin substitute (made from cultured skin and bovine collagen) which holds promise as a very useful cover of burn wounds.

In essence, the Hong Kong Skin Bank will provide advanced treatment options to serve the needs of about 250 patients admitted to the Prince of Wales Hospital for burns treatment every year. In the future, given adequate staffing and resources, the Hong Kong Skin Bank can provide similar services to other hospitals in Hong Kong in order to help other burns patients to recover from their burns injuries.

\* \* \* \* \*

For further enquiries, please contact Dr Walter King Wing Keung, Chief of the Burns Unit at the Prince of Wales Hospital (Tel: 6362624).

Attachment: Pictures of the equipment at The Hong Kong Skin Bank