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## Tracing the division of the medical profession to public-private imbalance in Hong Kong's healthcare system

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The existing literature about the medical profession assumes its unity. Hong Kong provides a case for exploring its division and the underlying causes. The sit-in protest of several hundred doctors and medical students in 2016, organized by the Hong Kong Medical Association (HKMA), against an amendment bill proposed by the government to reform the Medical Council of Hong Kong (MCHK), was the most dramatic confrontation of the medical profession with the government. But to the extent that Hong Kong's healthcare system is dominated by the medical profession and almost all top positions, including the top government official in charge of healthcare policy, are occupied by medical doctors, the confrontation of the medical profession with the government revealed the division within the medical profession. Further study reveals the exclusion of the Hong Kong Medical Association (HKMA) from the Hospital Authority (HA) and its marginalization from the Health and Medical Development Advisory Committee (HMDAC). The exclusion of the HKMA is unusual because it is used to have very close relationship with the government. However, the relationship between the Hong Kong Medical Association (HKMA) and the government deteriorated after 1997. Apparently, a major cause of the changing attitude of the HKMA is the issue about public-private imbalance. On one hand, public doctors have suffered from very heavy workload in the public healthcare sector. On the other hand, the private sector has begun to face the problem of an oversupply of private doctors. Evidence suggests that the HKMA felt nervous about the implication of the reform of the Medical Council of Hong Kong (MCHK) to the issue of medical registration. The HKMA worries that any change about medical registration will have further and adverse impact on public-private imbalance. The implication of the division of the medical profession is that the political collaboration between the profession and the government is likely to be jeopardized. In turn, this will cast doubt on the future of healthcare reform in Hong Kong.

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