For Immediate Release

Hong Kong hosts landmark International Genomic Medicine Symposium

300 Industry Leaders Gather to Drive Medical Innovations and Showcase Hong Kong's Strengths

(Hong Kong, 17 November 2025) The **International Genomic Medicine Symposium** (Symposium), jointly organised by the **Hong Kong Genome Institute (HKGI)**, **Rare Diseases International (RDI)**, and **The Lancet Commission on Rare Diseases (LCRD)** opened today at the Hong Kong Science Park. This prestigious event has attracted close to 300 industry professionals, including medical practitioners, scientists, and researchers from over 20 countries and regions. Participants include distinguished figures from the Chinese Mainland, Europe, North America, South America, and Australia, alongside esteemed local experts and scholars. Discussions during the Symposium centre on cutting-edge topics such as clinical genetics, rare diseases, genomic medicine, artificial intelligence, data sharing, and ethical and legal regulations, fostering an in-depth exchange of the latest scientific discoveries and clinical applications.

The Symposium not only showcases Hong Kong's unique strengths in medical innovation but also successfully connects the city with experts and scholars from across the globe. By fostering collaborations and dialogues, this landmark event further enhances Hong Kong's standing in international medical research and accelerates the applications of genomic medicine to address healthcare needs. **Professor Chung-mau Lo, Secretary for Health of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR)**, delivered a keynote address at the opening ceremony. He said, "The HKSAR Government fully recognises the profound potential of genomic medicine in promoting healthcare and innovation. We steadfastly support the Hong Kong Genome Institute in integrating genomic medicine into clinical medicine, advancing research and nurturing talent in genomic medicine, enhancing public genomic literacy, and fostering partnerships with research institutions and industry leaders from around the globe. Together, we are determined to strengthen Hong Kong's role as an international health and innovation hub, ensuring that society at large can benefit from the most advanced diagnostic and treatment technologies. As a 'super connector' bringing together people, expertise and opportunities from around the world, Hong Kong is well placed to drive new breakthroughs that enhance community well-being and contribute meaningfully to global health."

Mr Philip Tsai, Chairperson of the Hong Kong Genome Institute, said, "This Symposium has brought together leading global experts, showcasing Hong Kong's unparalleled strengths in medicine and research, while fostering collaborations between Hong Kong, the Chinese Mainland, and the international community. It represents a significant step towards accelerating the clinical applications of genomic medicine and advancing our vision of *availing genomic medicine to all for better health and well-being*."

"We are deeply grateful to the Rare Diseases International and The Lancet Commission on Rare Diseases for making this event possible, as well as to the Health Bureau, Department of Health, Hospital Authority, university medical schools, and all other stakeholders for their tremendous support. Through the Hong Kong Genome Project, we are committed to building a unique genome database for the Southern Chinese, propelling medical innovation in diagnosis, treatment, and drug development into a brighter, healthier future," Mr Tsai added.

Dr Kirsten Johnson, Chair of Rare Diseases International, said, "We are pleased to collaborate with the Hong Kong Genome Institute in hosting this important conference, which advances rare disease research and promotes more appropriate treatment and care for people living with rare conditions worldwide. Experts and scholars from around the globe have come together to champion a person-centred approach, advocating for health equity, and fair access to medical care. Looking ahead, we will continue working closely with the Hong Kong Genome Institute and The Lancet Commission on Rare Diseases. With the dedication of all involved, we are confident that people living with rare conditions—wherever they are—will be seen, heard, and cared for."

The Symposium features five thematic sessions, representing an exceptional lineup of local and international speakers who share their expertise on the rapidly evolving field of genomic medicine. In the first session, **Professor Zhang Shuyang, President of the Peking Union Medical College Hospital**, presented a comprehensive overview of the innovative models for rare disease services, education, and research implemented in the Chinese Mainland, providing invaluable perspectives for attendees. **Professor Kym Boycott, Co-Chair of LCRD**, also contributed to this session by outlining strategic approaches aimed at enhancing patient care and improving the quality of life for individuals affected by rare diseases.

The second session in the morning was dedicated to case studies, effectively highlighting the immense potential of genomic medicine through both local and international applications. During this session, **Professor Roberto Giugliani, Co-Chair of LCRD**, analysed cases of inborn errors of metabolism. Furthermore, **Hong Kong Genome Institute Scholars Dr Derek Lee** and **Dr Becky Ma** presented case studies illustrating the applications of genomic medicine in the treatment of heart and kidney diseases. They demonstrated how genome sequencing facilitates the identification of pathogenic gene mutations, thereby enabling precise diagnosis, targeted treatment, and disease prevention.

Ms Alexandra Heumber Perry, CEO of Rare Diseases International, also shared insights into patient voices and perspectives at the Symposium. She emphasised that genomic medicine represents a critical opportunity to advance equity in healthcare for people living with rare diseases (PLWRD). The organisation advocates for global collaboration to ensure that scientific

progress translates into real-world solutions — enabling timely diagnosis, personalised treatment, and improved quality of life for PLWRD worldwide.

In the afternoon sessions, **Dr Brian Chung, Chief Medical and Scientific Officer of the Hong Kong Genome Institute**, will present the progress of the Hong Kong Genome Project (HKGP). Since its launch in 2021, the HKGP has made remarkable progress, successfully recruiting over 53,000 participants as of October this year. Dr Chung will also share insights into pharmacogenomics, exploring how genetic variations impact drug selection, dosage, and efficacy – an area that is garnering significant interest from the scientific and medical communities around the world for its substantial potential in clinical applications. In the same session, **Professor Aya El Helali, Advisor of the Greater Bay Area International Clinical Trial Institute, and Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of Clinical Oncology at the Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine of the University of Hong Kong**, will also share the opportunities that genomic medicine presents for drug development in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

Other esteemed leaders featured in the afternoon will include **Professor Dennis Lo, Vice-Chancellor and President of The Chinese University of Hong Kong**, who will share the latest advancements in plasma DNA analysis technology. **Professor Gareth Baynam from Perth Children's Hospital, Australia**, will introduce the potential and achievements of the artificial intelligence platform "UTOPIA", while **Professor Yong Chen from the University of Pennsylvania, the USA,** will explore the relationship between causal artificial intelligence and drug development. Additionally, **Professor Bartha Knoppers from McGill University, Canada**, will discuss the importance of newborn genomic screening.

The International Genomic Medicine Symposium is a one-day event. Following its conclusion in the evening, the LCRD will convene its second annual meeting in Hong Kong from 18 to 19 November to further discuss and deepen cross-regional collaborations. This marks the first time the Commission holds its annual meeting in Asia since its inception, underscoring Hong Kong's pivotal role in international medical innovation.

Please download the photos from here and refer to the photo captions below.

Photo 1 & 2

Professor Chung-mau Lo, Secretary for Health of the HKSAR Government, delivered a keynote speech at the International Genomic Medicine Symposium. The Symposium is co-organised by the **Hong Kong Genome Institute**, **Rare Diseases International**, and **The Lancet Commission on Rare Diseases** to accelerate the development of genomic medicine and benefit patients as well as the wider community.

Photo 3

An opening ceremony was held to kick off the International Genomic Medicine Symposium. Officiating guests included (from left) **Dr Libby Lee**, Chief Executive of the Hospital Authority; **Mr Thomas Chan**, Permanent Secretary for Health of the HKSAR Government; **Mr Philip Tsai**, Chairperson of the Hong Kong Genome Institute; **Professor Chung-mau Lo**, Secretary for Health of the HKSAR Government; **Dr Kirsten Johnson**, Chair of the Rare Diseases International; **Dr Ronald Lam**, Director of Health of the HKSAR Government; **Mr Terry Lai**, Acting Chairman of the Rare Disease Hong Kong.

Photo 4 & 5

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About Hong Kong Genome Institute

The Hong Kong Genome Institute (HKGI), established and wholly owned by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, commenced full operations in 2021. With the vision "to avail genomic medicine to all for better health and well-being" and supported by the Health Bureau, HKGI works in close collaboration with the Department of Health, Hospital Authority, medical schools of local universities and other stakeholders to accelerate the development of genomic medicine in Hong Kong along four strategic foci: integrate genomics medicine into clinical care, advance research, nurture talents and enhance public genomic literacy and industry partnership.

As the first step towards achieving its vision, HKGI launched the Hong Kong Genome Project (HKGP) in 2021 focusing on diseases and research cohorts that would benefit from whole genome sequencing. They include undiagnosed diseases, hereditary cancers and cases related to genomics and precision health. Being the city's first large-scale genome sequencing project, HKGP serves as a catalyst to benefit patients and their families with more precise diagnosis and personalised treatment. It also aims to establish genome database of the local population, testing infrastructure and talent pool to address the healthcare needs of Hong Kong in the long run.

For more information, please visit https://hkgp.org/en.

About Rare Diseases International

Rare Diseases International (RDI) is the global alliance of people living with a rare disease of all nationalities across all rare diseases. RDI's mission is to be a strong common voice on behalf of rare disease patients around the world, to advocate for rare diseases as an international public health priority and to represent its members and enhance their capacities. RDI has more than 120 member organizations from 50 countries, which in turn represent rare disease patient groups in more than 150 countries worldwide.

For more information, please visit https://www.rarediseasesinternational.org.

About The Lancet Commission on Rare Diseases

The RDI-Lancet Commission on Rare Diseases (RDI-LCRD) is a new initiative dedicated to improving the lives of Persons Living with a Rare Disease (PLWRD) globally by generating evidence-informed recommendations that can be implemented in all countries. The RDI-LCRD, chaired by Dr Roberto Giugliani (Brazil) and Dr Kym Boycott (Canada) brings together 27 Commissioners from 6 continents with a broad range of expertise, perspectives and experience. The overarching goal of the RDI-LCRD is to use robust data to ignite global action that will amplify the voices of PLWRD and ensure that they are seen, heard, and cared for, no matter where they live.

For more information, please visit http://www.rarediseasescommission.org.

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