

. Calendar.

XXXIIIrd Meeting of the Advisory Council on AIDS (ACA)

2:30pm 7 July 2000

IVth Meeting of the AIDS Prevention and Care Committee (APCC)

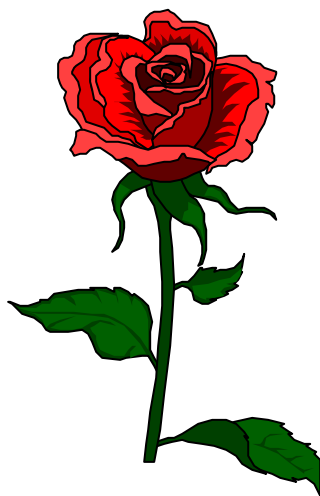
6:00pm 14 September 2000

XXth Meeting of the Scientific Committee on AIDS (SCA)

2:30pm 21 September 2000

IInd Meeting of the Committee on Promoting Acceptance of People Living with HIV/AIDS

2:30pm 8 June 2000




Debates on the Durban Conference

THE XIIIth International AIDS Conference to be held in Durban, South Africa, in July might become one of the most controversial World AIDS Conferences. This will be the first International Conference to be hosted in Africa, where the worst HIV/AIDS epidemic of the world is located. About 10% of the general adult population in South Africa are HIV positive. Unfortunately, its President, Mr. Thabo Mbeki, takes the bizarre view that AIDS is not caused by HIV infection. In reconvening of the National AIDS Council some time ago, the country's leading AIDS experts were left out.

As a result of such mis-thought and denial, it will not be too unexpected that the AIDS policy in South Africa is not helping much to stem the epidemic, and care for the infected. A good example is the decision of withholding national funding for giving zidovudine to prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission, a tragic event which is preventable.

Because of the political implications, there were people talking about boycotting the Conference. However, it was pointed out by medical and scientific authorities the need of expressing their support for the truth of the epidemic and necessary actions, by going to the Conference instead. Absence due to political reasons will only enhance the ignorance and misdeeds for the epidemic. As the Continent is so heavily hit by HIV/AIDS, multiple critical issues are to be deliberated in the Conference, including affordable and effective prevention efforts, access to HIV care, reduced-price antiretroviral drugs, treatment of opportunistic complications, breast-feeding and so on.

So, what are the implications for us? Though the situation in Africa is very different from ours, the subject illustrated clearly the importance of facing the reality and calling for prompt action with a sound policy. Continuing support from the policy makers will be immensely crucial for a successful

HIV/AIDS programme. 






**Dr Sex Hotline
2337 2121**

The SCA met

THE Scientific Committee on AIDS had its 19th meeting on 25th May to discuss on unlinked anonymous screening, HIV infection in drug users and perinatal transmission. Surveillance data of HIV and its related risk behaviours among drug users were reviewed, and members expressed concern over the rising trend of HIV infection and presence of risk behaviours. Prof. SH Lee, who is also Chairman of the Action Committee Against Narcotics (ACAN) is very supportive of joint efforts of ACAN and ACA to tackle the problem.


As the warning bell

"Let us share - show our care"

THE Red Ribbon Centre organised a function titled "Let us share - show our care" cum its 3rd anniversary ceremony on 20th May. The theme is chosen to arouse AIDS awareness and disseminate the important message of accepting people living with HIV/AIDS. This is in line with the local AIDS prevention strategies, for which Council of this term has set up a dedicated Committee. Held in the Atrium of the Lok Fu Shopping Centre, the event attracted a lot of people who live in the district. On the same day, the Red Ribbon Centre has its open day. Though housed within a government clinic, the Red Ribbon Centre is largely community-based and charged with a mission to facilitate and enhance the community's response to HIV/AIDS. 

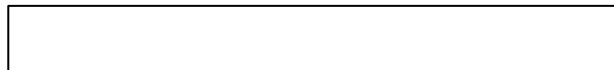
was rung, a number of suggestions were raised in the meeting: (a) promote voluntary HIV testing for drug users, (b) fill in the knowledge gap of HIV prevalence in street drug users, (c) develop strategic plan with the participation of various stakeholders, and (d) better understand the size and characteristics of the drug users, in particular those who are not within the treatment network.

Progress of the work on prevention of mother-to-child (M T C) H I V

transmission was also reported in the meeting. With the involvement of the stakeholders of the issue, it is expected that a comprehensive report on how best to prevent MTC transmission will be available by the end of this year. 



AIDS Hotline 2780 2211 *Messages, Counselling
HIV Testing*



Department of Health, Hong Kong SAR

A workshop to build capacity for drug use and AIDS

FOCUS

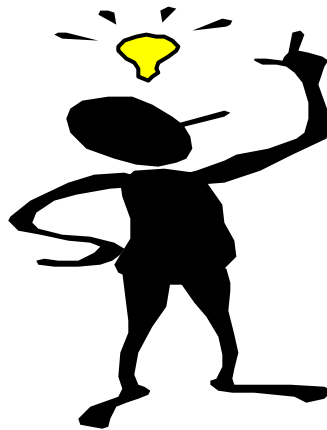
ON the 30th May 2000, some 50 drug and AIDS workers participated in "An interactive workshop on HIV prevention among drug abusers - a harm reduction approach". Facilitated and delivered by Mr. Palani Narayanan, the workshop was organised by the Advisory Council on AIDS, the Hong Kong Council of Social Service and the Red Ribbon Centre - UNAIDS Collaborating Centre for Technical Support.

Mr. Narayanan was the former Chairman of the Asian Harm Reduction Network (AHRN), an internationally renowned non-governmental organisation that works on drug use and AIDS. Various newsletters, situation documents, workshop reports and training manuals were published by AHRN. Furthermore, Mr. Narayanan has served as a Consultant to the UNAIDS, for developing resource materials and others.

The one-day workshop covered a variety of areas: basics of drug users, HIV in drug users, why prevent HIV among drug users, the concept of harm reduction and application of harm reduction to plan successful

intervention programmes. Also, Dr. Clive Chan from the Department of Health presented an update on the HIV situation among drug users in Hong Kong.

The presentations by Mr. Narayanan were interactive and lively. Easily digestible examples were



given to illustrate the very rich content. Specifically, he shared with the participants on a number of successful intervention activities, such as outreach counselling and education, HIV testing and drop-in centre. As Mr. Narayanan understood well our local situation, he made reference to our programmes whenever applicable.

There was also a session of experience sharing by local drug and/or AIDS workers, again facilitated by Mr. Narayanan. This was

joined by people from many organisations, including Society for the Aid and Rehabilitation of Drug Abusers, KELLY Support Group, Caritas, Pui Hong Self-Help Association, Action for REACH Out, Community Drug Advisory Council, Hong Kong Council of Social Service, AIDS Concern, Society for AIDS Care, Department of Health, Hospital Authority and others. Impression of the local scene of drug users and AIDS, programme strengths and weaknesses, and applicability of overseas model to Hong Kong were among some of the areas discussed.

Hopefully the workshop has been able to enrich our knowledge and skills on dealing with drug abuse and AIDS. This is considered necessary in view of the rising HIV infection among drug users. It would be good if the workshop could trigger off more efforts - provoke thoughts on programme development, catalyse implementation of intervention activities, enhance collaboration between drug and AIDS workers,..... ♂