

# ACA NEWSFILE

(Publication of the Advisory Council on AIDS, Hong Kong)

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ACA Secretariat

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## . Calendar .

### XXXVIth Meeting of the Advisory Council on AIDS (ACA)

2:30pm 20 April 2001

### Vth Meeting of the AIDS Prevention and Care Committee (APCC)

6:00pm 15 March 2001

### XXIst Meeting of the Scientific Committee on AIDS (SCA)

2:30pm 8 February 2001

### Vth Meeting of the Committee on Promoting Acceptance of People Living with HIV/AIDS (CPA)

2:30pm 12 April 2001

## Y F S

DON'T forget the Tenth Anniversary of the *Youth Action on AIDS* Funding Scheme (YFS), which will feature a youth forum, a prize presentation and a project exhibition to be held in the Low Block of City Hall on 3 February 2001.

The programmes will begin in the morning, with the ceremony to be officiated by guests of honour at 3:30pm.

THE 35th meeting of the Advisory Council on AIDS was held on 19 January. The Council deliberated three major issues - addressing HIV infection in children, examining public awareness and the role of the Government, and discussing the development of strategies for promoting acceptance of people living with HIV/AIDS.

As a follow-up to the endorsement of the principles for preventing mother-to-child HIV transmission at the last Council meeting, members were glad to hear that the Government had reaffirmed its support of the policy. While a timetable is yet to be worked out, it was noted that professional bodies and the public service had already started to make efforts on the implementation of universal antenatal HIV testing. At the meeting, Professor YL Lau reminded members of the social, psychological and family dimensions of HIV infection in children, despite the small number reported so far. This has prompted the Council to revisit some of the previously established guidelines for schools and social welfare settings in the coming months.

Public awareness has always been a popular subject in the press or in the community. The Council examined data collected in the last years on the level of public awareness, and also reviewed the role of the Government. The main points are summarized on the following page (page 6).

Finally, the Committee on Promoting Acceptance of People living with HIV/AIDS (CPA) reported its progress. As the youngest committee, members were pleased with its dynamism. The draft strategies proposed by the core teams (see page 8) were noted. In the meantime the Committee is pursuing a number of concrete approaches to ensure that the promotion of acceptance is not just a theory, but a practice cross-cutting our HIV prevention and care programmes in Hong Kong.

The next meeting is scheduled for 20 April 2001. Members are welcomed to suggest topics for deliberation. ⌘

The YFS now operates as a project of the Task Force of Youth of the Council's AIDS Prevention and Care Committee. ⌘  
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**Hong Kong  
Virtual AIDS Office**  
**[www.info.gov.hk/aids](http://www.info.gov.hk/aids)**

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## Health Care reform

THE release of the consultation document *Lifelong Investment in Health* has generated trains of debates in the community. A question was raised at the recent ACA meeting on the subject of health care reform, which focused on the document's implications on HIV/AIDS in Hong Kong.

Members were particularly concerned about two aspects: firstly, the implication of the Secretary for Health and Welfare's referral to HIV/AIDS as an example of "expensive" treatment"; and secondly, the Department of Health's future strategy of withdrawing from direct service and therefore the possible disruption of HIV and STD prevention and care activities.

Based on the discussion, the ACA shall be submitting its views to the Health and Welfare Bureau (HWB) formally before the end of the consultation period.

The consultation document is available from HWB's webpage at [www.info.gov.hk/hwb](http://www.info.gov.hk/hwb). ⌘

## The Government and AIDS Awareness

AT the 35th meeting of the Advisory Council on AIDS, members have had a detailed discussion on AIDS awareness centering on two questions: (a) *Is the current level of public awareness acceptable?* and (b) *What should the Government's strategy be in future?* The discussion has led to a number of consensus viewpoints:

Firstly, it was resolved that the early efforts of the Government and the community were commendable. These efforts are believed to have led to the current scenario characterized by a relatively low HIV rate in Hong Kong.

Secondly, there was a lack of research and applicable instrument to evaluate the level of public awareness, and its correlation with programmatic efforts.

Thirdly, a change of publicity strategy is warranted, which should be supported by the Government, and should take into consideration the changing landscape of HIV/AIDS locally, internationally and the interface with the Mainland. The "scare tactic" in the early years should now be replaced by strategies focusing on prevention and the promotion of acceptance of people living with HIV/AIDS.

Fourthly, sustained effort in the promotion of public awareness is a crucial component of an effective HIV programme.

Finally, the moral standard attached to the issue of AIDS can be disruptive in the development of a cohesive approach in combating the infection in the community. It is apparent that the launching of media campaigns should serve to promote awareness as well as foster the development of a supportive environment to achieve behavioural changes, the hallmark of HIV prevention. ⌘

THE Committee on Promoting Acceptance of People living with HIV/AIDS has resolved to write to the Privacy Commissioner, Ethics Committee of the Hong Kong Journalists Association, and the Press Council to reflect its concern about the the speculation of an actor's possible HIV status in October 2000. On top on dramatizing the incident, the newspaper concerned even challenged the actor to go for blood donation, a move that runs contrary to the strategy of HIV prevention in Hong Kong.

CPA is studying cases on a regular basis to consider incidents of discrimination or non-acceptance. ⌘

**AIDS Hotline 2780 2211** *Information, Counselling  
HIV Testing*


## Reviewing 2000

ON 18 January 2001, the Department of Health released the reported statistics on HIV/AIDS for the year of 2000.

One hundred and eighty-three cases of HIV infection were reported last year, bringing the total to 1542. The male-to-female ratio was 3.2:1. Of the reported individuals 69% were ethnic Chinese. Sexual transmission remained the commonest route of HIV spread, accounting for 76% of the reported cases. Of note was the report of nine injecting drug users and two cases of mother-to-child infection.

In the same year, 67 AIDS cases were reported, bringing the cumulative total to 500. Again, a majority (87%) were Chinese. The commonest presenting illness was *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia, followed by tuberculosis.

Unlike the infectious disease notification system,



		HIV	(AIDS)
<b>Gender</b>	male	1277	(443)
	female	265	(57)
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Chinese	1066	(387)
	non-Chinese	476	(113)
<b>Transmission</b>	heterosexual	876	(321)
	homosexual	298	(92)
	bisexual	78	(26)
	injecting drug use	32	(8)
	blood/bl products	68	(19)
	perinatal	12	(5)
	undetermined	178	(29)
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1542</b>	<b>(500)</b>

HIV/AIDS Reporting is a voluntary programme involving the input of physicians and laboratories. The system is supplemented by other surveillance mechanisms including serosurveillance, STD surveillance and behavioural monitoring.

Detailed analysis of the updated reports will be

published in the coming issue of *Hong Kong STD/AIDS Update*, a joint publication of AIDS Unit and Social Hygiene Service of the Department of Health. The latest statistics and the publications can also be viewed at the Virtual AIDS Office maintained by AIDS Unit ([www.info.gov.hk/aids](http://www.info.gov.hk/aids)). ⌘

## Site Visit

MEMBERS of the *Committee on Promoting Acceptance of People living with HIV/AIDS (CPA)* visited the construction site of the Fanling Health Centre on 4 January 2001 before the Committee meeting scheduled for the same

afternoon.

The visit had been organised to enable members to have a better understanding of the context of the project. Over five years ago, residents in Richlands Garden started a campaign in protest against a similar project in Kowloon Bay. The project - Integrated Treatment Centre - taking care

of patients with HIV/AIDS, STD and skin diseases, is now in normal operation. ⌘

InterAction



# On Promoting Acceptance

In Focus

HOW can the acceptance of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHA) be achieved? This perhaps is the question reverberating in the *Committee on Promoting Acceptance of People living with HIV/AIDS* (CPA) in the last year.

The work of CPA has not been easy. There was the early debate of how "acceptance" should best be defined, and how a group could make progress without first agreeing on a definition. As a working definition, the CPA reckons that acceptance of PLHA exists if they are

considered as ordinary members of the community who are accorded equality, compassion and mutual respect. The CPA further adopts the definition of discrimination as any measure entailing an arbitrary distinction among persons depending on their confirmed or suspected HIV serostatus or state of health.

In the last meeting of CPA, the Committee examined a draft strategy paper that attempted to put together the consensus of four core teams formed last year to study acceptance from the four perspectives of education, legal provision, care professionals and involvement of certain stakeholders. These were later identified as the avenues for promoting acceptance.

The Committee had agreed on three core principles in the course of developing strategies for promoting acceptance of people with HIV/AIDS in Hong Kong. These principles are

**Firstly**, strategies on promoting acceptance are congruent and complementary with those on human rights. The very definition of acceptance includes equality which is one basic human right. Emphasis on human rights in turn enhances acceptance of people with HIV/AIDS by virtue of their empowerment.

**Secondly**, non-discrimination of PLHA is necessary but not sufficient for acceptance. By the same token, efforts to this end should not be limited to anti-discrimination. Acceptance with the positive qualities of equality, compassion and mutual respect shall be the ultimate goal.

**Thirdly**, acceptance of PLHA entails a change of attitude, which is a long term process. All efforts on acceptance should therefore be designed with sustainability as one priority. Furthermore, societal efforts should be of sufficient breadth in order to bring about what is essentially a change of cultural values and norms.

So, what next? Similar to the prevention of HIV infection, the promotion of acceptance requires a concerted efforts, the involvement of multiple

disciplines, and the design of innovative approaches. Turning theory into practice is a difficult step. While there are no readily available protocols, the commitment of CPA members seems to be an encouraging sign for achieving our common goal of promoting acceptance of people living with HIV/AIDS in Hong Kong. **✂**

## EOC Code of Practice on Education

IN January, the *Equal Opportunities Commission* (EOC) issued the Code of Practice on Education under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO) for public consultation.

The DDO provides coverage to guard against discrimination in settings including not only employment but also education. HIV/AIDS is one condition protected by the legislation. The Code elaborated on the definition of discrimination as it relates to education. It explains also the implications as regards access to education, and introduces a set of practical guidelines for education establishments.

The consultation period would last till the end of March. Members concerned with the subject could submit their views to EOC. A series of consultation meetings will be held in February and March. Further information is available from EOC's website [www.eoc.org.hk](http://www.eoc.org.hk) **✂**