

## Calendar

**XXXVII<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the  
Advisory Council on AIDS  
(ACA)**

2:30pm 24 August 2001

**VII<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the AIDS  
Prevention and Care  
Committee (APCC)**

6pm 26 September 2001

**XXIII<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the  
Scientific Committee on  
AIDS (SCA)**

2:30pm 27 September 2001

**VI<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the  
Committee on Promoting  
Acceptance of People  
Living with HIV/AIDS (CPA)**

2:30pm 24 October 2001

## Meetings rescheduled

MEMBERS may have noticed that all committee meetings planned for July and August 2001 have been postponed to September. This is not a result of the summer heat, as some may suspect, but rather the staff movement at the ACA Secretariat, making it impossible for some events to proceed as scheduled.

The Secretariat apologizes for any inconvenience which might have arisen because of the rescheduling. ⌘

In this issue, we have

**COUNCIL NEWS on page 34,**

**INTERACTION with the Mainland on page 35,  
and**

**our FOCUS on condom on page 36**

## From 1996 to 2001

IN November 1996, the Advisory Council on AIDS hosted the first ever Hong Kong AIDS Conference (ACA Newsfile vol 3, no 11, November 1996). Carrying the theme of "Building New Hope Together", the Conference brought together some 400 participants from various disciplines. The Council subsequently concluded that the Conference was a good community forum and should preferably be held every few years.

Since the 1996 conference, HIV/AIDS has taken on a different path in Hong Kong. Antiretroviral therapy has since become the standard of care, improving the quality of life of people living with the infection. Despite a relatively low prevalence, HIV transmission has continued. The problem in drug users is now a matter of concern. The HIV rate in Mainland China has risen sharply. On the response side, the Council conducted its first review in 1998 and began a new phase of strategy development with community planning now in progress. On the other hand, two workshops on the HIV epidemiology and surveillance in the Pearl River Delta Region were held (in 1998 and 2000) with the support of the Council.

Against these backgrounds, a second conference would take place later this month. (Have you registered??) The second conference is hosted by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS). The Advisory Council on AIDS sees the upcoming conference as another forum to enhance community involvement, a landmark event to allow us to reflect on our efforts critically, and perhaps a milestone to mark the beginning of a new wave of programmes that can best suit the needs of Hong Kong. - the editor

**Advisory Council on AIDS website**  
**[www.aca-hk.com](http://www.aca-hk.com)**



## Code of Practice on Education

THE Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) has issued a Code of Practice on Education ("the Code") in accordance with Section 65 of the Disability Discrimination Ordinance. The Code was submitted to the Legislative Council for vetting in June 2001 and came into operation on July 6, 2001.

Members would remember that the Code covers also people living with HIV/AIDS, and has therefore been discussed at previous meetings of the Advisory Council on AIDS and its Committee on Promoting Acceptance of People living with HIV/AIDS. Copies of the Code are now available from EOC, and can also be downloaded from their website [www.eoc.org.hk](http://www.eoc.org.hk). ⌘

## Building Capacity on Evaluation

THE Council is pleased to note that the Red Ribbon Centre is organizing a series of activities to build capacity on the evaluation of community-based HIV/AIDS prevention activities. Dr Dale Stratford of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta will be in Hong Kong in the last week of September. She will be delivering a training workshop, conducting case studies and would also be visiting local agencies working on HIV prevention. This initiative has come as a result of the visit of Dr Homer Tso and Professor CN Chen of the Advisory Council on AIDS to Atlanta earlier this year. (Refer to *ACA Newsfile* issue no. 88, April 2001)

The Red Ribbon Centre is collecting views on how to make the best out of the September programme. You may wish to contact Dr Francisco Wong at 23046268 should you have any comments or suggestions. ⌘

## CPA Seminar

THE Committee on Promoting Acceptance of People living with HIV/AIDS (CPA) is hosting a seminar as a satellite activity of the coming Hong Kong AIDS Conference. Titled "Aspects of Discrimination: its mechanisms and resolution" the seminar will be held at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre on 27 August 2001 (beginning 6pm). The following speakers will be presenting their views, each giving a different perspective on the subject:

- Mr Greg Gray, Asia Pacific Network of PWAs
- Prof Joyce Ma, Department of Social Work, Chinese University of Hong Kong
- Mr Mak Hoi Wah, Senior Lecturer of City University of Hong Kong
- Ms Anna Wu, Chairperson of Equal Opportunities Commission
- Prof Sing Lee, Department of Psychiatry, Chinese University of Hong Kong
- Prof CN Chen, Chairman of the CPA

The presentations will be followed by an open forum, moderated by Prof CN Chen. Simultaneous interpretation will be provided for the function.

Members and interested people are welcomed to register through the ACA Secretariat (Mr John Yip - tel 23046100, fax: 23370897). ⌘

## ICAAP

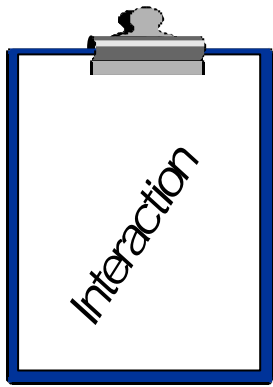
PROFESSOR YL Lau and Dr Richard Tan of the Advisory Council on AIDS have been nominated to attend the VIth International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific (ICAAP) between 5 and 10 October in Melbourne, Australia. Their participation is made possible through the support of the AIDS Trust Fund. ⌘

## Publication for reference

THE Council Secretariat received a letter from Dr ASM Abdullah, Member of the Task Force on Travellers of the AIDS Prevention and Care Committee (APCC), about the recent publication of an article on the HIV situation in Hong Kong

The article, titled "Hong Kong: an epicentre of increasing risk for HIV transmission? overview and response", was authored by Dr Abdullah, R Fielding and AJ Hedley. It appeared in the Spring 2000 issue of *AIDS and Public Policy Journal*. Interested members may wish to contact Dr Abdullah for reprints or other questions about the article. ⌘

[ACA Newsfile is happy to make announcement on scientific work published by the Council (and its committees' members) - editor]



## Guangzhou

DR Homer Tso and Professor MHNg of the Advisory Council on AIDS visited the Antiepidemic Station of Guangzhou on 5 July. They were accompanied by Dr SS Lee and Dr Francisco Wong of the Council Secretariat. The unofficial visit was a follow-up to a project to improve surveillance and epidemiology of HIV/AIDS in the Pearl River Delta Region, which was initiated by the Department of Microbiology of the University of Hong Kong and the AIDS Unit of Department of Health.

The group met with experts from Guangzhou, Guangdong province, Macao and also Shenzhen during the half-day visit. The meeting was hosted by the Guangzhou Antiepidemic Station, which was headed by its director Dr Yao Jianming. Others present were Dr Xue Weifeng and Chen Xiaopeng. Dr Maria Marcelina Morais and Dr Lam Chong from the Macao Health Department also joined the meeting.

The meeting discussed about the HIV situation in Guangdong, Macao and

Hong Kong. In reviewing the situations, the main focus went to that in injection drug users. There has been a slight increase in the HIV prevalence and the number of HIV reports in drug users in Hong Kong (prevalence of up to 1%) and Macao. The HIV rate in drug users from Xinjiang is high (30% in some cases) in the cities in Guangdong while that of local residents has remained lower (2-5% in Guangzhou; 1.7% on average in Guangdong; 0.5 - 0.8% in Shenzhen). There is a broad range of prevalence from less than 1% to over 10%.

The practice of needle-sharing is a matter of concern. The Hong Kong group was impressed by the efforts made by the Guangzhou authorities in stepping up prevention measures against HIV/AIDS. While needle exchange is being considered, condom vending machines have already been installed outside underground rail stations in the city.

It was agreed that technical exchanges are crucial to improve understanding of people working on HIV/AIDS in the region. Arrangements are underway to invite the participation of Guangzhou's experts to the upcoming Hong Kong AIDS Conference in August. ⌘

## Red Ribbon Fellow

DRGAN Zhigao from Guangxi was one of the Lions Red Ribbon Fellows in Hong Kong, who came here for a short visit in July 2001. He gave a presentation at the Red Ribbon Centre on 26 July on the HIV situation and the responses in Liuzhou in Guangxi. The seminar was participated by members of the Council's committees and others interested in HIV/AIDS in Hong Kong.

The Lions Red Ribbon Fellowship Scheme is a joint project of Red Ribbon Centre and Lions Clubs International - District 303 Hong Kong and Macau. Each year up to four professionals from Mainland China are sponsored to come to Hong Kong to share experience and conduct studies on subjects of common interest. ⌘

## Work with media

ON 27 July, Dr Homer Tso, ACA Chairman, was interviewed by Cable TV on a programme that explored the dynamics of cross-border HIV spread between Hong Kong and the Mainland. Dr KM Ho, Secretary of the Scientific Committee on AIDS and a dermatovenereologist, explained to the reporters about the STD situation in Hong Kong. ⌘



Professor MHNg trying the condom vending machine outside one of the Guangzhou underground railway system on 5 July 2001.

## Condom controversy - again?

IN mid-July, there were newspaper reports suggesting that condoms were only useful for HIV prevention and not for protecting from other sexually transmitted diseases (STD). The conclusion has come from 'experts' from the United States. The media have once again stirred up the debate on how effective condoms are.

What's more important for those of us working on HIV prevention is to find out if there have been new scientific studies which disapprove of the use of condom for STD prevention. The answer is NO.

The media were actually commenting on a report of a consensus meeting held in the States in June 2000 with the participation of a panel of 28 experts. The meeting examined scientific evidence on condom effectiveness for STD prevention. The meeting was not intended to make public health policy recommendations regarding the roles of condoms in HIV/STD prevention policy and programmes.

The Panel concluded that the effectiveness of male condom was strongest for HIV. As for the other infections, there were insufficient studies (and hence evidence) to support the effectiveness of condom except for the prevention of gonorrhoea in males. The Panel stressed

that the *absence of definitive conclusions reflected the inadequacies of evidence, and should not be interpreted as proof of the adequacy or inadequacy of the condom.* The Report also highlighted the scarcity of scientific studies, part of the reasons being the difficulty of designing ethical and objective research.

The Report further commented that intact condoms are essentially impermeable to particles with the size of STD pathogens, and that even in the event of breakage, leakage or slippage, condom would result in greatly reduced exposures.

It is important for us to distinguish between two concepts, efficacy on one hand and effectiveness on the other. *Efficacy* is the protection the users would receive under ideal

conditions while *effectiveness* is that provided under actual conditions of use. Whereas condom as a device is probably 100% efficacious, its effectiveness, like any intervention, can never be 100%. The difficulty in designing and conducting a good study would, unfortunately, continue to cloud the issues for some time.

The summary report was prepared by National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, National Institutes of Health and the Department of Health and Human Services of the United States, dated 20 July 2001. &

### Reported HIV/AIDS Statistics updated 31 March 2001

		HIV (AIDS)
<b>Gender</b>	male	1306 (449)
	female	280 (60)
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Chinese	1096 (393)
	non-Chinese	490 (116)
<b>Transmission</b>	heterosexual	898 (328)
	homosexual	304 (92)
	bisexual	79 (27)
	injecting drug use	39 (9)
	blood/b products	68 (19)
	perinatal	13 (5)
	undetermined	185 (29)
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1586 (509)</b>

SOURCE: Special Preventive Programme, Department of Health

