

## Calendar

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

2:30pm 16 November 2001

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

6pm 26 September 2001

XXIII<sup>th</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

## Highlights of this issue:

- \* The 37th meeting of the Advisory Council on AIDS (p.40)
- \* Updated HIV situation (p.39)
- \* Hong Kong AIDS Conference and Community Forum 2001 (p.41 & 42)

## The Summer Heat

IT would be wrong to assume that Hong Kong's AIDS programmes go into hibernation during the hot humid month of August. It's more like the active Spring season. On 16 August, the Department of Health released its quarterly reported statistics for the second quarter of the year. The same day also heard the Government's announcement of implementing the universal antenatal HIV testing programme. A week later, the Advisory Council held its 37th meeting. On the following Sunday, the Community Planning Committee hosted a community forum to release its first prioritisation report. We then

witnessed the opening of the three-day Hong Kong AIDS Conference 2001 on 27 August.

This issue of *ACA Newsfile* focuses on the key messages delivered at these meetings. The meetings had provided an excellent opportunity to make new contacts, re-establish old links, reflect on our work, and perhaps consider new strategies. There seemed to be always something to each and every member of the Council and its committees during these meetings. Caution: The amount of information implicated in these fora is substantial. You may want to refer to the original documents (conference proceedings, meeting papers etc) before drawing any conclusions!

Understandably, it might take sometime for everyone to digest and assimilate the presented "food". In the meantime, we shall be following up on issues deliberated over the last month.

August 2001 may in future be remembered as a landmark month in the history of Hong Kong's AIDS programmes.

Would new ideas be converted into strategies?

Let's wait and see.

- the editor



The CPA Seminar - go to page 42

**Advisory Council on AIDS**  
**www.aca-hk.com**



## Antenatal HIV Testing

ON 16 August 2001, the Department of Health issued a press release announcing the launching of universal antenatal HIV testing beginning

1 September. The new service is offered to all clients attending antenatal clinics operated by the Department of Health's Maternal and Child Health Centres and obstetric units of the Hospital Authority.

The spokesman explained that the programme has been introduced



"in line with international development,... It parallels strategy advocated by the United Nations, and has been adopted in accordance with the recommendations of the Government-appointed Advisory Council on AIDS."

Clinical guidelines established by the Council's Scientific Committee on AIDS is now downloadable from the Virtual AIDS Office ([www.aids.gov.hk](http://www.aids.gov.hk)) or through ACA's website [www.aca-hk.com](http://www.aca-hk.com). Other education materials including leaflets, poster and a new hotline message are also available from the Red Ribbon Centre. ⌘

## Experts in Hong Kong

THE Hong Kong AIDS Conference 2001 has enabled the Advisory Council on AIDS (ACA) to meet experts from around the world who have contributed to Hong Kong's AIDS Programmes, including Dr Julian Gold (Albion Street Clinic, Sydney), Dr Tim Brown (East West Centre, Honolulu), Dr Helene Gayle (CDC, Atlanta), Mr Palani Narayana (Asian Harm Reduction Network) and Dr Emile Fox (UNAIDS). They were, among others, the invited guests in a dinner hosted jointly by Dr Homer Tso, ACA chairman and Ms Christine Fang, Chief Executive of Hong Kong Council of Social Service, on 27 August. ⌘

## China AIDS Conference

The First National Conference on STD/AIDS prevention and control would be held in mid-November in Beijing.

In the announcement made by the Ministry of Health Centre for AIDS Prevention and Control (dated 7 August, kindly provided by Hong Kong AIDS Foundation), the Conference would cover the following six aspects: (a) policy and programme management, (b) multisectoral collaboration and NGOs' participation, (c) HIV epidemiology and surveillance, (d) health education and intervention, (e) STD/AIDS diagnosis, treatment, counselling and care, and (f) basic research.

The ACA Secretariat would inform members later when more is known about this coming forum. ⌘

## UK Strategy

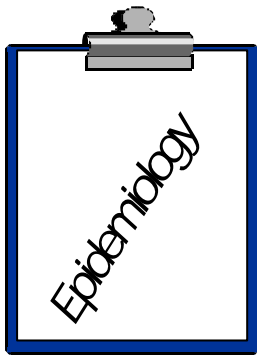
THE United Kingdom Department of Health has released *The National Strategy for Sexual Health and HIV* in July for public consultation. At the Council meeting on 24 August, it was suggested that members should take reference from the publication while considering the new strategy for the coming years. The document is available on internet [www.doh.gov.uk](http://www.doh.gov.uk) ⌘

## CPP Report

THE Community Planning Committee presented its *Report on Recommended Intervention Activities for HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care* to the guests of honour at the Community Forum on 26 August 2001. Dr Homer Tso's copy is now with the Secretariat (in a four-inch thick folder). The Council will be examining it shortly. Those of you interested may contact the Community Planning Committee directly (c/o Hong Kong Coalition of AIDS Service Organisations HKCASO - tel: 28978660, fax 28976387).



Unfortunately additional copies (nor soft copies) are not available. Interested members may come to the Council Secretariat in Yaumatei for reading the document. ⌘



### Situation Overview

ON 16 August, Dr KH Wong of the Department of Health presented the updated HIV/AIDS situations as derived from the reporting mechanism which has been in place since 1985. The quarterly press meeting was conducted at the Red Ribbon Centre.

A total of 50 HIV cases were reported in the second quarter (April to June) of the year, bringing the cumulative total to 1636. Fifteen new AIDS cases were reported in the same

quarter. While heterosexual transmission has accounted for a majority of the new infections, there was the concern that homosexual spread was still continuing. The occurrence of infections in injection drug users was no longer a rarity.

HIV/AIDS reporting is a voluntary surveillance system managed by the Special Preventive Programmes of the Department of Health. Results are analysed on a quarterly basis. Other components of the HIV surveillance programme are: STD (sexually transmitted diseases) surveillance, sero-surveillance and behavioural surveillance.

The *Hong Kong STD/AIDS Update* is a quarterly publication that reports on the results of these surveillance activities. This can be available from the *Virtual AIDS Office* ([www.aids.gov.hk](http://www.aids.gov.hk)). ⌘

## HIV/AIDS in the Mainland

A press conference was held on 23 August in Beijing to report on the latest HIV situation. Experts estimated that over 600,000 people in China have already been infected. Under the notification system, 3541 were reported in the first six months of the year 2001.

National authorities were concerned about the HIV spread in injection drug users. The average HIV prevalence has risen from 0.05% in 1995 to 4.98% in 2000. The most serious situation has occurred in Yunnan, Xinjiang, Guangxi, Guangdong and Sichuan.

It was reported that an Action Plan has been formulated with specific targets to be achieved by the year 2005. ⌘

### Reported HIV/AIDS Statistics updated 30 June 2001

		HIV		AIDS	
		total	/ last quarter	total	/ last quarter
<b>Gender</b>	male	1347	41	460	11
	female	289	9	64	4
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Chinese	1131	36	404	11
	non-Chinese	505	14	120	4
<b>Transmission</b>	heterosexual	931	31	340	12
	homosexual	315	11	94	2
	bisexual	79	0	27	0
	injecting drug use	40	1	9	0
	blood/b products	68	0	19	0
	perinatal	13	0	6	1
	undetermined	190	7	29	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1636</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>524</b>	<b>15</b>

**NOTE:**

The "total" refers to the cumulative total number reported since 1984, under the voluntary HIV/AIDS Reporting System. "Last quarter" refers to the period April to June 2001. The "AIDS" number is a subset of the "HIV numbers" and the two should not be added.

**SOURCE:**

Special Preventive Programmes, Department of Health, Hong Kong SAR Government

## Lessons Learned

MEMBERS listened to the report given by Dr Chan Kin Man of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, who has been supported by the Department of Health to study the Kowloon Bay incident - the objection of residents of the Richlands Garden to the establishment of a clinical service that includes the care of patients with HIV/AIDS.

While acknowledging the difficulty in facing the NIMBY (not in my backyard) syndrome, members agreed that the lessons would be invaluable in helping Hong Kong deal with similar phenomena in the future. It was suggested to have the report published and made widely available. ⌘

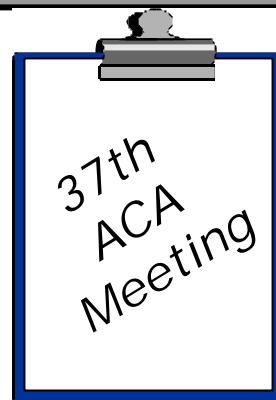
## Annual Report

THE Secretariat has drafted the annual report of the Advisory Council on AIDS (ACA) for the period August 2000 to July 2001. This is the second report of the Council for the term 1999 to 2002, under the chairmanship of Dr Homer Tso, JP. The draft report was tabled at the 37th meeting. Following amendments and possible revisions, the report would be published for the reference of the Council, its committees, subcommittees, task forces, and whoever interested in the work of the ACA system. ⌘

## Enhancing Community Response

MEMBERS noted that there have been a great deal of discussion on the progress of the community planning process. It was resolved that the paper "Enhancing the effectiveness of the community planning process in the Hong Kong context - a proposed plan" was a useful stimulus to improve the process, while members are open to the precise model to be adopted in due course.

The above paper can be downloaded from the website of the Advisory Council on AIDS at [www.aca-hk.com](http://www.aca-hk.com). ⌘



## UN and China's Response to AIDS

DR Emile Fox, UNAIDS Country Programme Adviser in China, explained to members of the Council about the escalating HIV epidemic on a national level. There were active discussions on the roles of international agencies and those in Hong Kong in support of China's efforts to fight the epidemic.

A plaque was presented to Dr S S Lee during the meeting in recognition of the contributions of the Red Ribbon Centre in supporting the national responses to HIV/AIDS. The meeting also touched upon possible means of collaboration in the future, and the followups to the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS in June.

Dr Fox was on a brief visit to attend the Council meeting, the community forum on Sunday (26 August) and the Hong Kong AIDS Conference 2001. He left Hong Kong on 28 August. ⌘

The chairman (left) making a point in response to the report given by Dr Chan Kin Man (fourth from left)





# TAKING STOCK & MOVING AHEAD

**The Second Hong Kong AIDS Conference was held between 27 and 29 August. A Community Forum was staged on the preceding day at the same venue to discuss the prioritisation of effective interventions for HIV prevention and care. The two events are reported together, as both help Hong Kong to take stock of what we have been doing in the last few years, and to move ahead together. - ACA Newsfile Reporter**

THE appearance of key figures like the Director of Health (Dr Margaret Chan), ACA chairman (Dr Homer Tso), chairman of the AIDS Trust Fund (Dr NK Leung), Mrs Betty Tung, and heads of AIDS agencies in Hong Kong reflects the importance Hong Kong attaches to the four days' events. Are we moving "Towards Greater Community Participation" as suggested by the theme of the Conference?

What then are the main lessons learned? Are there innovative ideas from the Community Forum? Anything new on treatment? These were the revolving questions heard at the Convention Centre where over 400 participants came together, energised and determined to get the best out of occasions.

## **Expanded response**

Truly there has been an expanded response in the last three years. People working on

AIDS could feel it. The Convention Centre was filled with new faces who had not been involved in AIDS before 1998 (when the ACA review was conducted and reported). The community planning process has been able to attract the participation of vulnerable communities, generated new researches, and is itself staffed by a core team of committed people who're new to the AIDS arena.

The organisation of the Conference by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service bears witness to the enhancing role of mainstream community organisations in HIV/AIDS. This is an encouraging move though



the range of services (HIV prevention and care) currently delivered by mainstream NGOs is still very limited.

## **Positioning community planning**

Despite discrepancy of views on the process, no doubt community planning is now assuming a central position in strategising HIV prevention and care activities in Hong Kong.



The term "community planning" is heard in almost each and every session in the Conference. There were concerns about funding of the process, discussions on the future model of the process, and debates on how to deliver the products of the pilot cycle. Concluding from these

discussions, the key messages are: firstly that it works, and secondly that Hong Kong should move forward instead of turn back.

## **Gaps in capacity**

Hong Kong is not at the forefront of HIV research. The Conference was not a forum to present scientific discoveries. Rather it has

allowed participants to consider the relevance of such discoveries in the Hong Kong context.

There are clearly missing gaps in local research on basic, clinical, public health and social sciences on HIV/AIDS. For example, our understanding of risk behaviours has come just from a few isolated surveys. Programme evaluation is yet to be explored. There are also gaps

[cont'd overleaf]

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in the capacity of intervention - outreaching commercial sex workers, harm reduction in drug users, training of health care workers.....If the new decade of the HIV epidemic is going to be different from what had been happening in the past, are we prepared?

## Noah's Ark

Dr Homer Tso, in his

plenary presentation on 27 August, equated Hong Kong's AIDS programme to Noah's Ark. We don't know when the flood (epidemic) is coming, nor do we have an agreed definition for a flood. Dr Tso was suggesting that we might not even have the Ark ready. The challenge ahead is - how to reinvent an Ark with the right engine (programme with sustainable mechanisms) and Noah (leadership). ⌘



Speakers at the CPA seminar (from left to right): Prof Sing Lee, Mr Mak Hoi-wah, Dr Travis Kong (representing Mr Greg Gray), Prof CN Chen (seminar chairman), Prof Joyce Ma, Ms Anna Wu.

## CPA Seminar

THE Committee on Promoting Acceptance of People living with HIV/AIDS (CPA) hosted a seminar on 27 August, as a satellite programme in support of the Hong Kong AIDS Conference 2001.

Titled "Aspects of Discrimination: its mechanisms and resolution", the seminar brought together experts and

workers from various fields who're concerned about discrimination as it relates to HIV/AIDS. There were therefore the political angle, psychiatric perspective, social work context, legal framework and the perspective of the people living with HIV/AIDS. Unfortunately Mr Greg Gray could not make it to the seminar because of another commitment. His presentation was however

read out by a representative.

There was active discussions following the presentations. The programme was in fact overrun. The Secretariat is in the process of producing the proceedings both for documenting the very many ideas generated at the seminar as well as for the reference of those who might have missed the seminar. So watch out! ⌘

**Hong Kong AIDS Conference - Community Forum**