

⌘ Calendar ⌘

XLVIII Meeting of the
Advisory Council on AIDS
(ACA)

2:30 pm 8 October 2004

XXXIII Meeting of the
Scientific Committee on
AIDS (SCA)

2:30 pm 21 September 2004

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

6:30 pm 10 September 2004

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

2:30 pm 2 September 2004



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Web site: <http://www.aca-hk.com>

From Bangkok to



Toronto:

The Tough Road Ahead in the Campaign to Combat HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS is still a major global emergency, which must remain at the forefront of policy-makers' priorities. That was the over-riding message of the 15th International AIDS Conference in Bangkok, Thailand in July 2004 and it is a message that will be repeated again and again before the next International AIDS Conference in Toronto, Canada in July 2006.

For the World Health Organization, the Bangkok conference was an opportunity to review the progress made, and assess the myriad challenges that remain, particularly when it comes to achieving the goals of the "3 by 5" Initiative – the joint programme with UNAIDS that aims to get 3 million people living with HIV/AIDS in developing and middle-income countries on antiretroviral (ARV) treatment by the end of 2005.

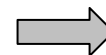
In WHO's Western Pacific Region alone, at least 1.5 million people are living with HIV/AIDS. Of these, 170 000 need antiretroviral treatment at this stage of their disease, according to estimates released in June 2004. However, only 15 000 (a mere 9%) have access to such medication.

Four countries of special concern

Four countries are of special concern to WHO in its Western Pacific Region: Cambodia, China, Papua New Guinea and Viet Nam.

Cambodia has the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in the world outside sub-Saharan Africa. While the estimated prevalence rate fell from 2.8% in 2001 to 2.6% in 2002, the country is still grappling with an epidemic that could jeopardize economic gains of recent years. It is estimated that 26 000 people, including children, who are currently infected with HIV could develop full-blown AIDS by 2005.

To be continued...



... The government of Cambodia recognizes the threat, and is working closely with WHO and other partners to tackle the situation.

China, with an estimated 840 000 HIV/AIDS cases, is still considered a low prevalence country, given the ratio of cases to the overall population. The Chinese Government, however, is committed to containing the epidemic in the world's most populous nation and is calling for swift action at the central and provincial levels nationwide. An estimated 70% of cases in China are linked to injecting drug users (IDUs). These include female IDUs who may barter sex in exchange for drugs, hence serving as bridge to the general population.

By contrast, heterosexual transmission is the predominant means of HIV infection in *Papua New Guinea*, which is facing a major HIV/AIDS epidemic, with estimated annual increases of 15%-30% in numbers infected. Parent-to-child transmission is the second most common means of infection. The similarity of sexual behaviour patterns in Papua New Guinea and those in sub-Saharan Africa suggests to many experts that the epidemic there has the potential to reach those of sub-Saharan Africa – with potentially devastating impact for the already impoverished country's economic and societal structures.

In *Viet Nam*, the official estimate of HIV prevalence in the 15-49 age group was 0.28% in 2002. However, there are an average of 40 to 50 new HIV infections reported every day and it is projected that there will be 197 000 people living with HIV/AIDS by 2005. The situation may be far worse than these figures indicate, since underreporting is a persistent problem and a significant number of those infected do not refer to health services until the disease is well established. As in many other Asian countries, the number of reported cases linked to sexual transmission is still low, but this number is increasing. It is expected that sexual transmission will become the dominant mode of transmission in coming years.

Prevention and care go hand in hand

"In the Asia-Pacific region," said Dr Bernard Fabre-Teste, a WHO HIV/AIDS expert, "prevention means widespread application of two types of actions. First, condom promotion programmes – acknowledging that the condom is truly the only preventive vaccine when it comes to HIV/AIDS. And second, harm reduction programmes, including possible substitution treatment such as methadone for injecting drug users." Dr Fabre-Teste noted that the controversy triggered in Bangkok over which types of HIV/AIDS prevention programmes to encourage was needlessly divisive. WHO and its partners, he said, insist that, while abstinence should be an important part of the approach to the epidemic, abstinence alone is not realistic. While a country's preferences will be sociologically and culturally based, Dr Fabre-Teste pointed out, the optimal prevention platform is one that combines the "CNN approach" (Condoms, Needles, Negotiating Skills) with the "ABC approach" (Abstinence, Be Faithful, Condoms).

In the end, however, the long-term success of any prevention and care programme or approach depends on the investment by governments and their partners. This will require a significant long-term financial outlay, combined with long-term commitment on the part of all players.

"Whether it's '3 by 5', or any other initiative," said Dr Shigeru Omi, Regional Director of WHO's Western Pacific Region, "decision-makers, stakeholders and all partners must invest more in HIV/AIDS prevention today if they want to avoid paying significantly more tomorrow. This is true not only for countries in WHO's Western Pacific Region – but across the world."

This is an edited version. The Update was released by WHO Regional Office for Western Pacific on 30 July 2004. For more information, please visit: <http://www.wpro.who.int>

The 47th ACA Meeting

The Hong Kong Advisory Council on AIDS held its 47th meeting on 30 July 2004. The following is a summary of the meeting.

Agenda Item 3

- A report on Hong Kong's participation in the XV International AIDS Conference



It was noted that over 30 Hong Kong participants from various organizations had taken parting in the conference:

The types of activities in the Conference included scientific presentations, skill-building workshop, exhibition booths, satellite meeting and off-site events. The 2004 AIDS Film Festival was also one of the highlights of the Conference.

The XVI International AIDS Conference would be held in Toronto, Canada in July 2006.

Agenda Item 4

- Construction of the first set of Core Indicators for monitoring Hong Kong's AIDS Programme

The ACA first deliberated the issue at its 42nd meeting and resolved to construct a set of core indicators (CI) to monitor Hong Kong's AIDS programme. It was noted that the CI were compiled by using existing data and modifying UNAIDS indicators as appropriate. The data used in the first set of CI were collected on a yearly basis covering the year 2003. By regularizing the exercise, longitudinal information could be obtained to allow monitoring and evaluation of the AIDS programme in Hong Kong.

The paper also set out systematically the data collected with a short analysis on the following 5 areas of concerns:

- i HIV/AIDS in the workplace

- ii Knowledge and sexual behaviour among youth
- iii People with sexual risk behaviours and drug injection
- iv Mother to child transmission of HIV
- v HIV treatment for infected people

Agenda Item 5

- Study on the needs of HIV infected haemophiliacs in Hong Kong: An administrative report on the assessment of stresses and coping strategies in people living with haemophilia and HIV infection in Hong Kong

Members noted the administrative report, which depicted the activities of the study including setting out the aims of the study, selecting data collection methods and listing out constraints and problems. From the Results Report, they found that these patients would normally encounter isolation from the society, problem of mobility and multiple physical and psychological problems.

Members also had a preliminary discussion about how ACA could assist these patients. Most of the members thought that the ACA should take on a coordinating role to ensure that their individual needs would be met.

Agenda Item 6

- Planning of a new role for the Scientific Committee on AIDS

The discussion would be deferred until next meeting.

Agenda Item 7

- Information Papers

(a) UNAIDS 2004 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic-executive summary

(b) The face of HIV/AIDS in China

Members noted the two information papers.



**Tripartite meeting
on infectious diseases
held in Hong Kong**



The Guangdong, Macau and Hong Kong health authorities agreed on August 6 to continue strengthening their cooperation in the prevention and control of infectious diseases in a bid to better protect public health in the region.

The agreement was re-affirmed in the fourth tripartite meeting of Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Expert Group on the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases held in Hong Kong.

During the two-day meeting on August 5 and 6, medical experts and healthcare professionals of the three places discussed and shared their experiences on a wide range of subjects including infectious disease prevention and control measures and attachments and training of medical professionals.

Delegates at the meeting also reviewed the work the three parties had carried out since the last expert group meeting in 2003, which included the exchange of information on infectious diseases; training courses, attachment programmes and familiarisation visits for public health professionals and cooperation in the research of prevention and control measures of infectious diseases. They also reviewed the latest situation on the planning and development of admission and treatment facilities for patients of infectious diseases.

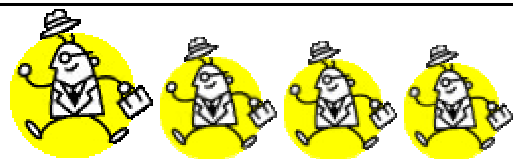
On cooperation in scientific research, the three parties were satisfied with the progress of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau **AIDS epidemiological study**, implemented since the last tripartite meeting in 2003. This collaborative project has enabled researchers to upload and amend their data as well as to monitor the general trends in the region. The final phase of the study will be implemented soon.

The three parties also agreed to hold the fifth tripartite meeting in **Macau**.

ACA & Lions Club

Dr Homer Tso, chairman of the Council, delivered a presentation at a joint meeting of three lions clubs of Hong Kong (District 303) and Shenzhen (District 380) - Lions Club of Island South, Pearl of the Orient, and Huanggang. Dr Tso introduced the work of the Hong Kong Advisory Council on AIDS, illustrating it with a series of stories that traced the history of HIV/AIDS in Hong Kong. He highlighted the importance of community participation in HIV prevention and care. Acknowledgement was given to the efforts of Lions Clubs International District 303 for the support rendered to HIV activities in Hong Kong in the last decade. Examples of these activities were: Lions Red Ribbon Fellowship, Community Charter on AIDS, "Ribbon" sculpture etc.

The meeting was held at the Sheraton Hotel on 27 August, and was joined by over 40 fellow lions from Hong Kong and Shenzhen. Dr Richard Tan, a member of the Council and past-president of Lions Clubs, was present at the meeting. Members of Lions Club of Huanggang Shenzhen showed keen interest in introducing HIV/AIDS as one of the project areas for the years to come.



The 15th CPA Meeting

The 15th meeting of the Committee on Promoting Acceptance of People Living with HIV/AIDS (CPA) will be held on 2 September 2004 (Thursday) at 2:30pm at the Red Ribbon Centre. There are three main items on the agenda:

1. Final version of ethical principles on partner counselling and referral for HIV infected individuals in Hong Kong
2. Final report on social and support services to people with HIV/AIDS in Hong Kong
3. Preliminary results report on assessment of stresses and coping strategies in people living with haemophilia and HIV infection in Hong Kong.