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

Use a condom for safer sex

Use a condom for safer sex is the tagline for the “Safer Sex Campaign” organized by the Department of Health (DH) with the support of the Information Services Department. Launched on 4 September 2005, the campaign aimed to promote the use of a condom for safer sex and to remove the taboo on the use of a condom in the community. Officiating at the launching ceremony, held at the Open Piazza of Olympian City Phase II, were the Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare & Food (Health), Miss Ho Shuk-ye, Susie, Controller, Centre for Health Protection of DH, Dr Leung Pak-yin, Legislative Councillor, Dr the Honourable Kwok Ka-kei, and Head of Radio 2, RTHK, Mr Chan Yiu-wah.

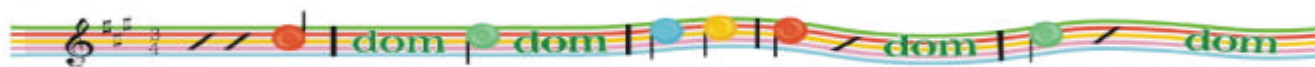
A new television API with the “Domdom” theme song in the background was publicly shown for the first time during the launching ceremony. The objective of the API is to encourage members of the public to protect themselves and their sex partners

from sexually transmitted infections and HIV by using a condom.

Sexual transmission is the commonest route of HIV spread in Hong Kong. As of second quarter of 2005, about 78 per cent of reported HIV infected cases in Hong Kong contracted the virus through sexual contact.

In addition, a condom distribution network has been established with joint efforts by universities, trade unions, Hospital Authority, private doctors, Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, Leisure and Cultural Services Department and DH to improve the accessibility of condoms during campaign period.

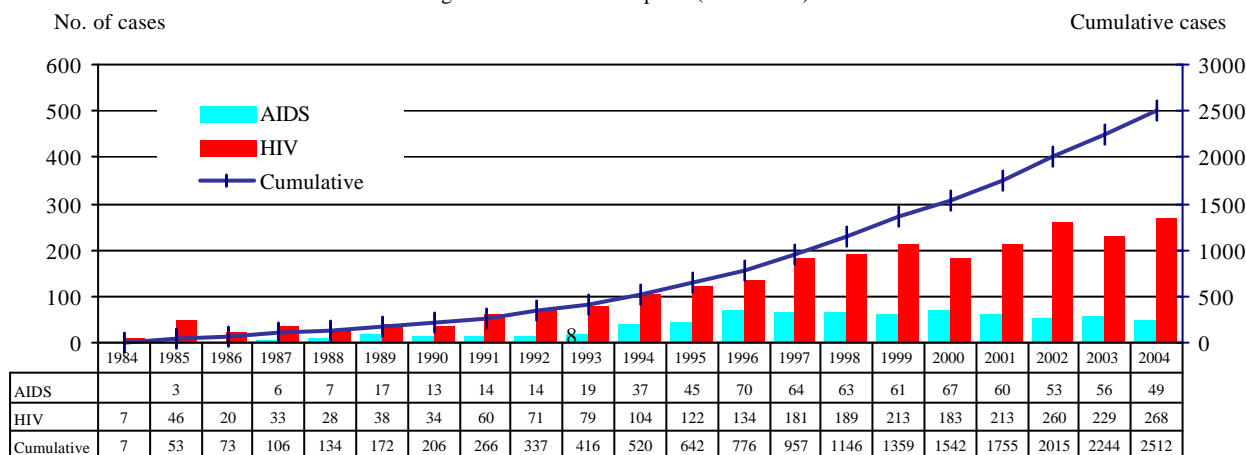
A sex education forum for teachers and social workers was organized by RTHK’s Sex Education Online, Hong Kong Professional Teacher’s Union and DH’s Red Ribbon Centre at the Polytechnic University on 25 September 2005 as a closing event.



Hong Kong is a low HIV prevalence area The first case of HIV infection in Hong Kong was reported in 1984. Under the voluntary and anonymous HIV/AIDS reporting system, the Department of Health has received a total of 2512 reports of HIV infection at the end of 2004 (Fig. 1). The number of reports increased gradually every year and currently about 250 new HIV reports were received annually. The number of HIV reports received in 2004 was 268. People with HIV infection develop into AIDS when they suffer from immunodeficiency due to HIV infection. There has been a decreasing trend in the number of AIDS reports received since 1996 and it is most likely contributed by the introduction of effective anti-retroviral treatment (HAART) at around the same time. About 50 new AIDS reports are now received each year. The most common illnesses presenting at AIDS are *Pneumocystis pneumonia* and *Tuberculosis*.

According to World Health Organization definition, the HIV prevalence in Hong Kong is low. It is estimated that there are about 3000 people living with HIV in the territory. The prevalence in adult population is estimated to be less than 0.1%, as determined in surveys of different populations.

Fig 1. HIV and AIDS reports (1984-2004)



* AIDS cases are included in the HIV cases

λ **Most infections were in adult, men and Chinese**

Majority of the HIV reports belonged to men and Chinese. In 2004, three quarters of the reports were men. Non-Chinese, who make up 5% of the Hong Kong population, accounted for 31% of the reported cases. Three quarters of the reports were from people aged between 20 and 49 (Fig.2-4).

Fig 2. HIV reports by gender (2004)

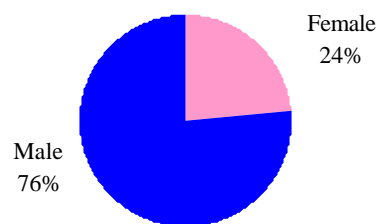


Fig 4. HIV reports by age group and gender (2004)

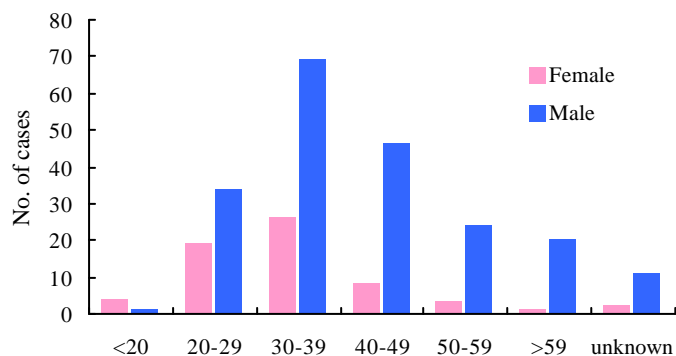
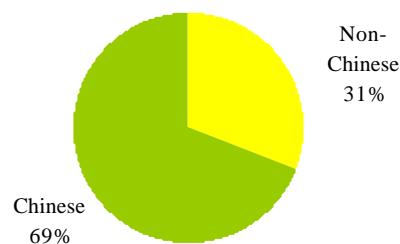


Fig 3. HIV reports by ethnicity (2004)



Unprotected sexual contact is the main risk for HIV

The HIV epidemic in Hong Kong started off in a group of about seventy recipients of HIV infected blood or blood products diagnosed in the mid 1980s, and a few isolated cases believed to have contracted the virus outside Hong Kong. Afterwards, sexual contact has become the most important risk for HIV transmission. In the early years most infections occurred among men having sex with men (MSM), and since early 90s heterosexual transmission became the commonest category. A proportion of cases did not have risk ascertained due to inadequate information.

Fig 5. Risks for HIV in men (2004)

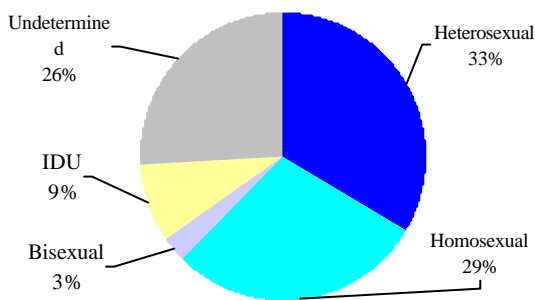
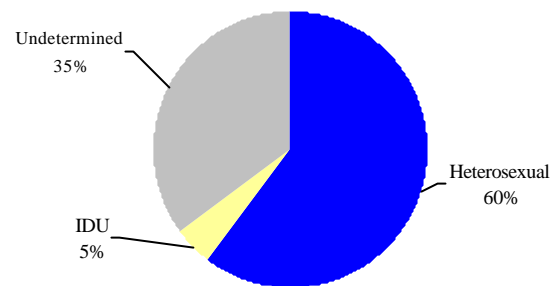


Fig 6. Risks for HIV in women (2004)

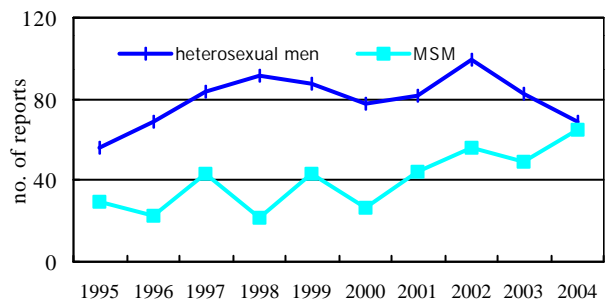


λ Infections among men having sex with men is on the rise

In 2004, heterosexual transmission accounted for 40% of all HIV reports, one third of cases in men (Fig. 5) and 60% in women (Fig. 6). HIV infection among MSM is a particular cause for concern recently. Local studies have shown that about 2% of men aged 18-60 are sexually active MSM, but infections among them contributed to 24% of all HIV cases and 32% of that in men in 2004. A rise in number of reports was observed (Fig. 7).

Among all population groups at higher risk of HIV infection, MSM has the highest seroprevalence rate of 1.8% in 2004.

Fig 7. HIV reports in heterosexual men and MSM (1995-2004)



Over the last 2 decades, infection among injecting drug users (IDU) only accounted for 3.4% of all HIV reports. A universal testing programme was introduced in methadone clinics in 2004 and increased the number of voluntary tests performed among drug users in the same year. Infections among injecting drug users contributed to 8% of all HIV reports in 2004. The prevalence of HIV among drug users remained at a low level of about 0.2% in the past few years.

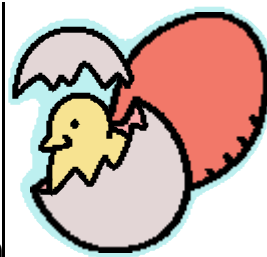
There was no report of HIV infection through perinatal transmission or transfusion of blood or blood product in 2004.

In 2004:

- In every 100,000 units of blood donated at the HK Red Cross Transfusion Service, **1** of them was tested HIV positive
- In every 10,000 pregnant women receiving public antenatal service, **2** of them were tested HIV positive
- In every 1,000 attendees at public sexually transmitted infection clinics, **1** of them was tested HIV positive
- In every 1,000 drug users attending methadone clinics, **2** of them were tested HIV positive



The Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare & Food (Health), Miss Ho Shuk-yee, Susie, Controller, Centre for Health Protection of DH, Dr Leung Pak-yin, Legislative Councillor, Dr the Honourable Kwok Ka-kei, and Head of Radio 2, RTHK, Mr Chan Yiu-wah at the Safer Sex Campaign.



First ACA meeting in its sixth term



The first ACA meeting in its 6th term of office will be held on **7 October 2005 (Friday)** at 2:30pm at the DH Conference Room, 21/F Wu Chung House, Wan Chai.

This will be the 52nd meeting since its inception in 1990. The agenda for the meeting will be as follows:

1. Proposed schema of operation for the Hong Kong Advisory Council on AIDS for 2005-2008
2. Homosexuality laws and HIV/AIDS in Hong Kong
3. Drawing up of next HIV/AIDS strategies for Hong Kong 2007-2011

***Details** of the discussions will be covered at the next issue of the Newsfile.*