

Editorial Board

Executive Editor: Mr WONG Man-kong ACA Secretariat

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IN THIS ISSUE We have

- **60th ACA Meeting** on pages 41 & 42
- **WAD Kick Off Ceremony** on page 43
- **Around Hong Kong** on page 44

Schedule

- 61st ACA Meeting on 11 January 2008
- 9th CFA Meeting on 18 December 2007

Website: <http://www.aca-hk.com>

60th ACA Meeting

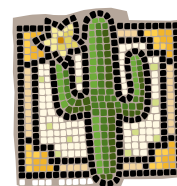


The 60th ACA meeting was held on 5 October 2007. There were three major items on the agenda. A summary of the discussion at the meeting is shown below:

Regarding the “Report on Epidemiological Investigation of a Large Cluster of HIV-1 Subtype B Infections in Hong Kong”, Members noted the background and the key findings of the epidemiological investigation. A larger cluster of HIV-1 subtype B infections with very similar nucleotide sequences involving seven men was first identified through molecular study in May 2005. Up to December 2005, a total of 20 men were found to fall within the cluster. They were suspected to share a common complex network of transmission as their nucleotide sequences of HIV were exceptionally similar to one another. An epidemiological investigation was conducted in early 2006 in response to the unprecedented nature and the large number of persons involved. Upon testing of newly reported and prior blood samples, more cases were subsequently found to fall into the cluster. As of September 2006, 34 individuals were identified to be involved in the cluster. In May 2007, the cluster further expanded in size to involve more than 50 persons. The identification of the large cluster implied that HIV had been spreading extensively among men who have sex with men (MSM) in Hong Kong. A large-scale

epidemiological investigation was conducted from June to September 2007 to understand the transmission patterns and to identify common risk factors within the cluster.

The two salient findings of the investigation were that many cases in the cluster were not yet immunologically compromised. There was evidence that a significant proportion of the cluster-cases were likely to be relatively recent infections. Recent infection was known to be more infectious giving rise to the fast spread of the cluster. It was also suggested that this particular strain of HIV-1 had significantly affected subgroups of MSM engaging in high risk sex behaviours. It was conceivable that the cluster had already spread to a wider MSM community and was fuelling a local self-sustaining epidemic of this strain of HIV-1 subtype B among MSM. Clusters were no longer clusters due to the lack of relationship in time and space. Phylogenetic studies were more suggestive of multiple entries than a point source outbreak. As a result, the cluster was more appropriately labeled as a local strain. It also marked the beginning of taken-root local HIV epidemic.



.... to be continued on page 42



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Members were supportive of the following recommended strategies for the prevention and control of the spread of the existing and future clusters:

- (a) Continued surveillance through molecular technology;
- (b) Prevention targeting cluster-cases in clinic settings including risk reduction counselling and partner counselling and referral;
- (c) Sexual health service for MSM;
- (d) Risk communication among the MSM community; and
- (e) Working with non-governmental organisations to step up interventions targeting MSM participating in group sex activities and drug-using MSM.

On Dr Tim BROWN's consultancy report on "HIV/AIDS in Hong Kong – Hitting a Moving Target *Building Effective and Sustainable Responses to an Evolving Epidemic*", the following areas of concern were highlighted to Members:

- (i) The overall HIV epidemic in Hong Kong continues to increase steadily;
- (ii) HIV among MSM remains a major concern and continues accelerating;
- (iii) IDU prevalence remains low, but ethnic minorities contribute disproportionately;
- (iv) Much of the ongoing heterosexual transmission may be occurring outside Hong Kong;
- (v) Data collection efforts have expanded, but significant information needs still exist.

Members noted the following general and specific recommendations made in the report:

- (A) General recommendation – improve local capacity to prioritize, cost, & evaluate:
 - (i) First, we need to acknowledge that all partners in the response in Hong Kong have a role to play in both prioritization and monitoring and evaluation.

- (ii) Second, expand the capacity to gather the data needed to do prioritization and effective prevention.
- (iii) Third, undertake an integrated analysis process to determine the contributions of different populations to new infections and explore the impact of alternative future responses to the epidemic.
- (iv) Fourth, establish the channels to provide this information as key inputs to the ACA, ATF, the FHB, the DH, the NGOs, and the affected communities.
- (B) Specific recommendations – prevention and formative prevention research to address unreached populations, identify risks and develop effective approaches:
 - (i) Men having sex with men – developing effective prevention for MSM today;
 - (ii) Injecting drug users – addressing the needs of ethnic minority IDUs in Hong Kong;
 - (iii) Female sex workers and clients – reaching the unreached and finding the source of infections;
 - (iv) Youth – shift focus to high-risk youth and explore ways of using new technologies; and
 - (v) General issues – improving our research instruments.

As regards the last item on the agenda "Hong Kong Joint World AIDS Campaign 2007", Members were aware that the promotion of acceptance of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) by the community and anti-discrimination was the proposed theme of the joint World AIDS Day campaign. The activities of the joint WAD campaign would include: (a) distribution of red ribbons, (b) a WAD kick-off ceremony and (c) publication of a calendar.

**The next ACA meeting will be held on
11 January 2008**



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Stop Stop Stop Stop Stop*

*AIDS AIDS AIDS AIDS
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“Keep the Promise”

Kick-off Ceremony for 2007 World AIDS Day Activities

“**Stop** AIDS, **Keep the Promise**” is the theme of the World AIDS Day Campaign in 2007. To disseminate the message and to raise the awareness of the public on HIV/AIDS, DH’s Red Ribbon Centre (RRC) has collaborated with Radio 2, Radio Television Hong Kong to organize a kick-off ceremony for 2007 World AIDS Day activities on 30 November 2007 (Friday) at 2:15 pm at the Central Atrium of Olympian City 2, Kowloon. During the ceremony, there will be promotional TV API featuring Miss Miriam YEUNG and a promotional video featuring the work of AIDS service organizations including Red Ribbon Center in its role as UNAIDS Collaborating Centre for Technical Support. As Red Ribbon

Centre is celebrating its 10th year anniversary this year, a photograph of its Patron and the officiating guests will be taken to commemorate this historical landmark.

Apart from the ceremony, the 2007 World AIDS Day activities will comprise a series of health promotional activities including the distribution of red ribbons to the general public and a public appeal for participating organizations and schools to wear red ribbon on the World AIDS Day on 1 December 2007.

Director of Health is the host of the function and the ACA Chairman is one of the officiating guests at the kick-off ceremony. Representatives of Shenzhen CDC and Macau CDC will also participate in the prelude to the World AIDS Day.



ACA Chairman at Siem Reap , Cambodia

(The 3-day regional workshop on the “Practical Approaches to the Effective Treatment of Drug Addition in Asia” was held from 13 to 15 September 2007)



Around Hong Kong



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Network of Hong Kong Based AIDS Programmes in Mainland China and Neighbouring Countries

Prof CHEN Char-nie, Chairman of ACA acted as the moderator in the captioned sharing forum held on 6 October 2007 at the Red Ribbon Centre. The forum provided a platform for Hong Kong based non-governmental organizations with AIDS projects on the Mainland China and in the neighbouring regions to share their work and experience and to enhance communication and collaboration among different parties. Representative of Public Health Consultancy Network, Happy Tree, Hong Kong Red Cross, AIDS Concern and the Salvation Army shared

their work in China and neighbouring countries with the participants.

