

Editorial Board

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First meeting in the seven term of ACA

The first meeting in the seven term of ACA, the 64th ACA meeting, was held on 10 October 2008. There were four major items on the agenda. A summary of the discussion at the meeting is shown below.

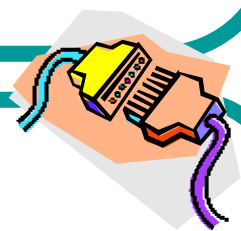
1. Introduction to Hong Kong HIV Situation and AIDS Programme

Members were presented the HIV situation of Hong Kong. A total of 121 cases of HIV infections were reported in the second quarter of 2008 bringing the cumulative total of reported HIV infections to 3 822 since 1984. 15 new cases of AIDS were reported in the same quarter, bringing the total number of confirmed AIDS cases reported to 966 since 1985. The 121 new cases comprised 98 males and 23 females. The predominant route of HIV transmission in the second quarter of 2008 remained to be sexual contact. Of those cases, 33 acquired the infection via heterosexual contact, 33 via homosexual or bisexual contact, 9 cases of injection drug use and 2 cases of blood/blood product infusion. The routes of transmission of the remaining 44 cases were undetermined due to insufficient data. There was a rise in HIV epidemic in the MSM community in recent years in Hong Kong. Members also learned that Hong Kong established a comprehensive range of programmes and activities by various sectors of the community to address HIV/AIDS. The term programme denotes the unique set of collaborative efforts. Hong Kong's HIV/AIDS Programme was executed by a variety of agencies including Government bureaux and departments, AIDS NGOs and main stream NGOs with HIV/AIDS services.

2. Proposed Schema of Operation for the Hong Kong Advisory Council on AIDS from 2008-2011

Members discussed the proposed mechanisms for guiding the effective operation of the ACA in the new term of office. The terms of reference of the ACA would remain unchanged as first proposed by the Government in 1996. The ACA would deliver its objective through: (a) deliberations at the ACA meetings; (b) commissioning, supervision and endorsement of reports on selected subjects; (c) activities of standing committee; and (d) oversight of the progress of the Recommended Strategies 2007-2011 and preparation for a new set of strategies. Members supported a two-tier system of interaction and recommended the continuation of the operation of the "Community Forum on AIDS" (CFA) to enhance the quality of HIV prevention and care activities in Hong Kong and to promote acceptance of those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. Membership of the CFA would be drawn from a wide spectrum of people similar to the last term's composition. The ACA and CFA secretariats would continue to be provided by the Special Preventive Programme (SPP).

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3. Report on the XVII International AIDS Conference held from 3 to 8 August 2008 at Mexico City

Members were presented the highlights of the XVII International AIDS Conference held from 3 to 8 August 2008 in Mexico City, Mexico with the theme "Universal Action Now!". Three ACA members, Ms. Elsie CHU, Mr. KO Chun-wa and Miss Nora YAU, participated in the conference with Dr. Jaime SIN, Secretary of AIDS Trust Fund, and Dr. Darwin MAK of the SPP, Department of Health. Representatives of AIDS NGOs and institutes of higher education in Hong Kong also attended the conference. It was noted that Dr. Peter Piot, the UNAIDS Executive Director, pointed out that after the success of combination antiretroviral therapy, the AIDS community needed a "combination prevention" approach, a combination of behavioural, medical, and structural approaches based on sound evidence, which would offer the best hope for future successful HIV prevention. One observation was that most countries were not targeting their HIV resources effectively. Epidemic characteristics varied greatly among and within countries. The prevention resources should be allocated in populations which the epidemic was concentrated. Even the right interventions were in place targeting the appropriate populations, the programmes could fail if their delivery was not well managed. Managerial capacity must be strengthened and the cost and quality of services must be continuously measured and assessed at the facility level in order to sustain the programmes.

The next International AIDS Conference will be held in Vienna, Austria in 2010.

4. Appraising HIV Prevention in San Francisco - Recap of a Study Visit

Members noted the outcomes of the visit to AIDS Office HIV Prevention Section of the San Francisco Department of Public Health by staff members of SPP. The visit covered issues on intervention on behavioural change, resource allocation and prevention priorities, epidemiology of San Francisco, surveillance system, MSM programming and role of community planning. The HIV/AIDS surveillance system of San Francisco was a predominantly active system with staff of Health Department visited medical facilities to collect information from various data sources to understand the HIV epidemiology. While the HIV situation looked relatively stable in recent years, the sexually transmitted infections (STI) showed an increasing trend. Total HIV cases reported between July 2002 and April 2008 in San Francisco were 7859. Over 90% of cases were male. Non-injecting MSM accounted for about 75% and injecting MSM accounted for another 10% of cases. The San Francisco model of resource allocation was an HIV prevention planning cycle. It involved five keys elements: epidemiological data, priority setting, prevention plan, request for proposal, prevention programmes. The HIV prevention work in both government and NGO was with a strong monitoring and evaluation component. They used the data collected from their service and other sources to better scope their service and formulate market stratification. The HIV prevention work in San Francisco was characterized by the specific and tailor-made approaches for different populations. It was noted that the success in controlling a rising trend of HIV incidence in MSM in San Francisco recently could be attributed to strong research arm, evidence-based approach in prevention, strong community participation and a shared understanding of the local epidemic.



empowerment approach to HIV prevention make sense?" and visited many AIDS NGOs including Hong Kong AIDS Foundation, AIDS Concern, Rainbow of Hong Kong, The Boys' and Girls' Clubs Association of Hong Kong and CHOICE to learn frontline experience and to identify potential community mobilization programme. She also spent a day to meet local researchers to discuss research gaps and AIDS Trust Fund Secretariat to brief them on gaps of formative research and the potential of implementing "Empowerment" in Hong Kong.

Consultancy Visit by Prof. Susan M. Kegeles

Prof. Susan M. Kegeles took a side trip to Hong Kong after attending the 9th Taipei International AIDS Conference on HIV/AIDS held in Taipei from 27 to 28 September 2008. Her visit to Hong Kong was a part of the consultancy on supporting the strengthening of HIV prevention and control in response to rising epidemic in Hong Kong undertaken by Dr Tim Brown of the East-West Center.

The objectives of her visit were to identify research gap in HIV prevention in MSM in Hong Kong, to propose a formative research agenda and to build the capacity of frontline AIDS workers on community building for HIV prevention in MSM. In her eight-day visit to Hong Kong from September 30 to October 7, she conducted a one-day

Prof. Susan M. Kegeles is the professor and co-director of the Center for AIDS Prevention Studies (CAPS) of the University of California, San Francisco. She is also very involved in community service as it relates to HIV/AIDS prevention. She developed an HIV/AIDS prevention intervention for young gay/bisexual men through two randomized, controlled trials of it, which involved working with six communities, the local and state health departments and AIDS community-based organizations (CBO). Since young gay/bisexual remain the group at highest risk for HIV infection in the U.S., after the intervention was found to be effective, CBOs and health departments began contacting her for help in implementing the intervention at their sites.

training workshop for frontline workers on "Addressing increasing rates of HIV among Hong Kong MSM: Does a community-wide, multi-level



MSM Capacity Building Project for Hong Kong

The Special Preventive Programme collaborated with the Albion Street Centre in NSW, Australia in building capacity for agencies working with men who have sex with men (MSM) in Hong Kong especially in the provision of appropriate clinical care and clinical health promotion, based on the experiences of working with MSM in Australia. As the World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Capacity Building and Health Care Working Training in HIV/AIDS Cares, Treatment and Support, Albion Street Centre has substantial materials and experience to offer to Hong Kong. It has been noted that New South Wales, Australia had experienced a surge of HIV infections in MSM and the rate of infection had been capped and remained stable after targeted interventions were put in place to halt the spread of HIV among MSM there. The collaboration with the Albion Street Centre on the above project could facilitate the sharing of knowledge and experience gained from working with MSM in the Australian context with local workers.

Identify the needs of both government and non-governmental organisations (NGO) to be able to work effectively with MSM in responding to high level sexual risk behaviours, concurrent sexually transmitted infections, meeting sex partners using the internet, participation in private group sex activities, and the use of psychotropic drugs in a sexual context;

Develop a programme which facilitates sharing the knowledge and experience gained from working with MSM in the Australian context, especially in response to the risk factors referred to above;

Build the capacity of clinical and NGO staff in Hong Kong to work with MSM to respond to the above risk factors; and

Promote collaboration between government and non-governmental organisations in order to reduce HIV infection amongst MSM.

Dr Kim Begley, a Senior Clinical Psychologist and Research Consultant and Mr Michael Buggy, a

Senior Social Worker and the Assistant Director of the Albion Street Centre and Mr Stephen Scott, Project Coordinator of ACON ran the 5-day MSM capacity building project in Hong Kong from 13 to 17 October 2008. The project included review

of clinical programme, workshops and an open lecture on "Australian responses to HIV". Feedback on the week's project from local attendees was very positive.

The objectives of the project are to:

Identify the needs of both government and non-governmental organisations (NGO) to be able to work effectively with MSM in responding to high level sexual risk behav-

