

.Calendar.

XXIXth Meeting of the Advisory Council on AIDS (ACA)
2:30pm 16 July 1999

XXXIIIrd Meeting of the Committee on Education and Publicity on AIDS (CEPAIDS)
6:00pm 8 July 1999

XVIIth Meeting of AIDS Services Development Committee (ASDC)
to be announced

XVIth Scientific Committee on AIDS (SCA)
9:30am 25 June 1999

Community Liaison Group

Following the deliberation of the ASDC at its last meeting on the NIMBY issue concerning the Kowloon Bay Health Centre, a Community Liaison Group was formed to better involve the community in enabling the new centre to provide quality services. Convened by Rev. Chu Yiu Ming, the Group comprises academic, Provisional District Board member, social worker, lawyer, health care professionals as well as other community leaders. Secretariat support is provided by the Department of Health.

The Group is very enthusiastic and thus far two meetings have been held, with the formation of subcommittees to carry out specific tasks. A variety of activities were planned to widely introduce the services of the Health Centre to the community, including publicity events, roving exhibitions, arrangements of visits/tours, and production of educational material. The efforts of the Group will be well-paid if health care services can be smoothly delivered through the new Centre to the patients in need, including those living with HIV/AIDS.



Presentation of HIV situation at the ACAN meetings

The paper "HIV situation in narcotic drug abusers in Hong Kong" was presented at the meetings of Treatment & Rehabilitation Sub-committee of Action Committee Against Narcotics (ACAN) and ACAN on 16 April and 29 April respectively, upon the invitation of Prof. SH Lee, Chairman of the ACAN.

Members of the Committees were interested in learning that the HIV prevalence has been relatively low in local drug users, but a suggestion of recent rise is witnessed. Some members commented that the collected data indicated that harm reduction measures, such as the methadone treatment

programme, have been useful in containing the spread of HIV in the drug-taking population, besides drug treatment itself. It is sure that active participation by the drug treatment and rehabilitation workers is essential for an effective AIDS prevention and care programme for the drug users, a group most vulnerable to be infected by HIV. ☒

AIDS Hotline 2780 2211 Messages, Counselling
HIV Testing

New Posters on drug abuse and HIV/AIDS

Two new posters targeting drug users on HIV prevention were recently produced through the Red Ribbon Centre upon the advice of the Task Force on Drug Abuse and AIDS. These have been posted up at the methadone clinics and also sent to other centres. One poster highlights the close relationship between AIDS and needle-sharing while the other stresses the important role of methadone and the hazard of injecting drugs.

The new posters are expected to remind the drug users the need to prevent HIV/AIDS, through provision of refreshing image. Raising awareness of AIDS through different educational materials shall be part of the overall efforts in strengthening prevention work among drug users. More in-depth individual counselling would, however, be beneficial in assessing the risk behaviours, advising behavioural modification, and offering voluntary HIV testing. ❄

AIDS Prevention Workshops for Trainers

The Hong Kong Council of Social Services will be organising two training workshops in May for social workers and other workers who will potentially be involved in helping their clients to prevent AIDS. The first activity titled "Empowering our clients to reduce HIV/AIDS risks" will feature exhibition booths, seminars and concurrent workshops. The second workshop will focus on safer sex and the sex culture in Hong Kong. These workshops obviously intend to equip the workers with the necessary knowledge and skills on HIV/AIDS. Involvement of the community, including the main stream non-governmental organisations is one of the prevention strategy laid down by the Council for the AIDS strategies in the coming three years. ❄

**Joint Publication**

The Scientific Committee on AIDS and the Hong Kong Society of Transplantation have lately published an original article in the Hong Kong Medical Journal, a popular local journal of the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine and the Hong Kong Medical Association. The article summarises the

findings and discussions on a joint survey undertaken by the two parties in 1996 on the practices in preventing blood-borne diseases during organ/tissue transplantation in Hong Kong. The move at that time was a good initiative to document and assess the situation, as well as collaboration with relevant organisation in pursuing matters relating to HIV/AIDS prevention and care. Any member who is interested to receive a copy of the article can contact the SCA Secretariat. ❄

Dr Sex Hotline
2337 2121

New Cosponsor for UNAIDS

On 8 April, the Joint United Programme on AIDS (UNAIDS) announced that United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) becomes the seventh UN organisation to join UNAIDS, adding to its existing cosponsors of UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank. UNDCP

addresses all aspects of drug problem, and has been active in supporting HIV prevention programmes and including such component in its own programmes. Such partnership on policy and programme sides on targetting HIV/AIDS prevention and care in relation to drug use shall shed light on the Hong Kong's endeavour towards similar goals. ☼

ACA and DH AIDS Unit
<http://www.info.gov.hk/aids>

Cumulative HIV/AIDS Statistics in Hong Kong updated 31 March 1999

| | | Total (AIDS) | |
|---------------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Gender | male | 1003 | (347) |
| | female | 189 | (43) |
| Ethnicity | Chinese | 822 | (296) |
| | non-Chinese | 370 | (94) |
| Transmission | heterosexual | 664 | (234) |
| | homosexual | 253 | (86) |
| | bisexual | 64 | (24) |
| | injecting drug use | 17 | (5) |
| | blood/bl products | 67 | (16) |
| | perinatal | 7 | (4) |
| | undetermined | 120 | (21) |
| TOTAL | | 1192 | (390) |

Department of Health, Hong Kong

Quarterly Statistics

On 7 May, the Department of Health released the reported HIV/AIDS figures in the first quarter of 1999. Forty-six new infections were reported, bringing the cumulative total close to 1200. The male-to-female ratio has further narrowed down to 2.3:1 for the new cases.

HIV/AIDS surveillance in Hong Kong is undertaken by the AIDS Unit of the Department of Health. It comprises a voluntary reporting system, seroprevalence surveys in selected community groups and unlinked anonymous screening. Contribution from medical practitioners and laboratories to the reporting system is essential for understanding the pattern and trend of the epidemic in Hong Kong. The surveillance programme is supervised by the Scientific Committee of the Advisory Council on AIDS. Together with the sexually transmitted diseases data from the government service, the HIV/AIDS information is published in a quarterly report - Hong Kong STD/AIDS Update - jointly run by the AIDS Unit and Social Hygiene Service of the Department of Health. ☼

Commercial Sex Industry

in Mainland China



On 9 April, some 33 local workers on AIDS and related fields attended a seminar on "Prostitution problem and situation in China" delivered by Prof. Shan Guangnai. Prof. Shan is a senior fellow of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and has vast experience on studying the social aspects of commercial sex industry and youth in China.

Commercial sex workers and their clients is one of the six vulnerable and thus priority community groups for AIDS prevention, as stated in the AIDS Strategies for Hong Kong 1999-2001. Prostitution in China is also linked to travellers going to and coming from Mainland China, another vulnerable group.

In the seminar, Prof. Shan gave an overview of the current situation of commercial sex and its cultural characteristics in China. He pointed out that the population size of commercial sex workers (CSW) has been growing substantially since the 1970s. He estimated that

China has a total of 2.5 million CSWs at present. They are mostly concentrated in the south-east coastal cities but with recent extension towards the east, the north and inland. In big cities, there are often defined areas where the CSWs aggregate to do their business, e.g. nearby hotels, movie theatres and parks.

Many studies have identified that the CSWs are typically of low education level (junior secondary or below), aged 18-29 years old, and with little living-earning capabilities. Also, a lot of them are migrant workers from other provinces of China and this further increases their vulnerability of going into the commercial sex industry. Nevertheless, the phenomenon of women being forced into prostitution is rare. The CSWs strive for earning more money and thus a better living standard through selling sex that they can provide. The factor of severe poverty in some parts of northern and western China undermine the immense flow of people to the south to seek jobs and as a result, some of them enter into prostitution.

Prof. Shan found that sex acts during commercial

sex activities became more diversified in recent years, e.g. oral sex, anal sex. Some CSWs in China actually acquire knowledge and skills on these acts from non-local clients, e.g. those from Hong Kong. The low level of awareness on STD/HIV, in particular for the migrant workers, coupled with the low condom usage rate, makes the CSWs vulnerable of contracting and also spreading STD/HIV. Condom is not commonly used due to low bargaining power of CSW and their fear of being caught by the police as an evidence of prostitution. He concluded that in dealing with commercial sex activities, the prevention of STD/HIV to protect public interest should come first.

Prof. Shan has come to Hong Kong under the Lions Red Ribbon Fellowship scheme, which was established by the Red Ribbon Centre and sponsored by the Lions Clubs International - District 303 - Hong Kong and Macau. The scheme aims to enable Mainland professionals to conduct research on HIV/AIDS pertinent to its control in Hong Kong.