

CHP reviews local HIV/AIDS situation in second quarter 2024

A total of 80 cases of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection were reported to the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) in the second quarter of 2024, taking the cumulative total of HIV infections reported locally to 12 223 since 1984.

Of the 80 additional cases involving 60 males and 20 females, 42 (52.5 per cent) acquired the infection via homosexual or bisexual contact, 26 (32.5 per cent) via heterosexual contact. The routes of transmission of the remaining 12 cases have yet to be determined due to incomplete information.

The new cases were mainly reported by three sources: public hospitals, clinics and laboratories (34 cases); AIDS service organisations (13 cases), and private hospitals, clinics and laboratories (12 cases). Also, 65 of the 80 newly reported cases have already received HIV specialist services at the DH or the Hospital Authority.

Regarding cases of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), 16 new cases were reported in this quarter, of which 12 cases (75.0 per cent) were attributed to homosexual or bisexual contact, and four cases (25.0 per cent) were related to heterosexual contact. Fifteen (93.8 per cent) of these new AIDS cases were diagnosed with HIV infection at the time of progression to AIDS, and the most common AIDS-defining illness remained to be Pneumocystis pneumonia. Since 1985, a cumulative total of 2 523 confirmed AIDS cases has been reported in Hong Kong.

Reviewing the latest HIV/AIDS situation in Hong Kong, a spokesman for the CHP said, "Sexual transmission remained the major mode of HIV transmission. The only way to know one's HIV status is to undergo HIV antibody testing. HIV is the cause of AIDS. In the past 10 years, over 80 per cent of AIDS patients progressed to AIDS within three months of HIV diagnosis. This indicates that the majority of people with AIDS have not undergone HIV antibody testing early.

"Members of the public should use condoms consistently and properly to reduce the risk of acquiring HIV. Those with a history of unsafe sex should take an HIV antibody test early. Key populations with a higher risk of infection should undergo regular HIV screening, while people who had sex but do not belong to these key populations should consider getting tested at least once. People with HIV should seek specialist care and HIV treatment as soon as possible."

The spokesman added that there are available community resources which enable members of the public to undergo HIV antibody testing. Members of the public can reserve a free, anonymous and confidential HIV antibody test via the DH's HIV Testing Service website (www.hivtest.gov.hk) or AIDS Hotline

(2780 2211). They can also order HIV self-test kits (oral fluid-based and blood-based (fingerprick) testing kits) on the HIV Testing Service website, and collect the self-test kits at various pick-up locations in Hong Kong. In addition, the DH launched The Commons this year, a one-stop sexual health service for sexual minorities, which provides regular follow-up services to referred cases with a higher risk of acquiring sexually transmitted infections. Sexual minorities who had high-risk behaviours may seek initial assessment from designated organisations. For services of The Commons and information of the designated organisations, please visit www.aids.gov.hk/english/itc/consultation.html.

The spokesman stressed that receiving early HIV treatment with antiretroviral drugs can effectively prevent the progression to AIDS and other complications in people with HIV. Lifelong antiretroviral treatment is indicated for all people with HIV, and the treatment remarkably improves their health and possibility of survival. Moreover, those who achieve sustained viral suppression to an undetectable level with treatment will not transmit the virus through sex, i.e. Undetectable = Untransmittable (U=U).

The public may visit the following pages for more information on HIV/AIDS: the Virtual AIDS Office (www.aids.gov.hk), the Red Ribbon Centre (www.rrc.gov.hk), the HIV Testing Service website (www.hivtest.gov.hk) and the Gay Men HIV Information website (www.21171069.gov.hk).