

CHP reviews local HIV/AIDS situation in third quarter 2023

A total of 113 cases of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection were reported to the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) in the third quarter of 2023, taking the cumulative total of HIV infections reported locally to 11 943 since 1984.

Of the 113 additional cases involving 92 males and 21 females, 52 (46.0 per cent) acquired the infection via homosexual or bisexual contact, 29 (25.7 per cent) via heterosexual contact, one (0.9 per cent) via injecting drug use, and one (0.9 per cent) via mother-to-child transmission. The routes of transmission of the remaining 30 cases have yet to be determined due to incomplete information.

The new cases were mainly reported by three sources: public hospitals, clinics and laboratories (61 cases); private hospitals, clinics and laboratories (21 cases), and the Social Hygiene Clinics under the DH (13 cases). Also, 71 of the 113 newly reported HIV-infected people have already received HIV specialist services at the DH or the Hospital Authority.

Regarding cases of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), 28 new cases were reported in this quarter, of which 12 cases (42.9 per cent) were attributed to homosexual or bisexual contact, and 13 cases (46.4 per cent) were related to heterosexual contact. The route of transmission of the remaining three cases has yet to be determined due to incomplete information. In this quarter, the most common AIDS-defining illness remained as *Pneumocystis pneumonia*. Since 1985, a cumulative total of 2 469 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. Members of the public should use condoms consistently and properly to reduce the risk of acquiring HIV.

"Besides sexual transmission, HIV can also be transmitted from mother to child during pregnancy, delivery and breastfeeding. Early detection of HIV infection with prompt and appropriate intervention can effectively reduce the risk of mother-to-child transmission. In Hong Kong, the Universal Antenatal HIV Testing Programme has been implemented since September 2001. Under this programme, pregnant women are offered with HIV antibody tests as part of antenatal care. Pregnant women should attend antenatal care and undergo testing early to protect the health of their offspring.

"HIV is the cause of AIDS. Early HIV treatment with antiretroviral drugs effectively prevents progression to AIDS and other complications. Lifelong antiretroviral treatment is indicated for all people with HIV, and the treatment remarkably improves their health and possibility of survival. Moreover, infected people who achieve sustained viral suppression to an

undetectable level with treatment will not transmit the virus through sex, i.e. Undetectable = Untransmittable (U=U).

"Members of the public 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. They can visit the HIV Testing Service website (www.hivtest.gov.hk) to make reservations of AIDS Counselling and Testing Service or order an HIV self-test kit. HIV-positive people should seek specialist care and HIV treatment as soon as possible."

â€‹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).