

[DH receives WHO's World No Tobacco Day Award for accomplishments in tobacco control \(with photos\)](#)

The Director of Health, Dr Constance Chan, today (May 30) received the World No Tobacco Day Award from the World Health Organization (WHO) on behalf of the Department of Health (DH). Speaking at the award presentation ceremony in Hong Kong, Dr Chan said that the DH has consistently accorded high priority to tobacco control and will continue to work with its partners to address the challenges ahead to protect the future generation from the harm of tobacco.

â€‹ The Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, witnessed the award presentation ceremony, in which Dr Chan accepted the award from Senior Policy Adviser to the WHO Professor Judith Mackay.

â€‹ The WHO marks May 31 as World No Tobacco Day annually to raise awareness on the harmful and deadly effects of tobacco use and second-hand smoke exposure, and to discourage the use of tobacco in any form. Every year, the WHO presents the World No Tobacco Day Award to individuals or organisations in each of the six WHO Regions in recognition of their accomplishments in tobacco control.

In her remarks at the presentation ceremony, Dr Chan said, "It is my great honour to receive, on behalf of the DH, the World No Tobacco Day Award 2019 from the WHO. We thank the WHO for this encouraging award in recognition of our tobacco control efforts. I must share this honour with all those who have joined hands with us in the fight against tobacco." Dr Chan also expressed her gratitude to allies from academia, the medical and healthcare professions, the education sector, the community and many government departments for their strong support over the years."

Dr Chan added, "Tobacco control is a persistent battle in public health. Smoking prevalence in Hong Kong has reduced from 23 per cent in the 1980s to 10 per cent in 2017. It is the result of over three decades of tobacco control measures, implemented in a comprehensive and sustained manner, with the help of many tobacco control pioneers and partners from various sectors of the community.

â€‹ "This year marks the 30th anniversary of the DH. Under the leadership of my predecessors including the late Professor S H Lee, Dr Margaret Chan and Dr P Y Lam, and with the support from our policy bureau, the DH has consistently accorded high priority to tobacco control.

"While we celebrate our success of achieving a low smoking prevalence of 10 per cent in Hong Kong, challenges lie ahead. Smoking remains the leading cause of preventable deaths in our population. New smoking products threaten

to undermine decades of tobacco control efforts. The introduction of the Smoking (Public Health) (Amendment) Bill 2019 to propose a ban on the import, manufacture, distribution, sale and advertisement of alternative smoking products is a testament to the political commitment of the Government, and the collective will of the society, to protect our future generations from the harm of tobacco, which damages our health and pollutes the environment."

Professor Mackay said, "The award gives due recognition to the work of the DH on tobacco control over many decades. Since the 1970s, the Hong Kong Government has taken firm, progressive and multi-pronged tobacco control measures. Hong Kong has been an exemplar in the WHO's Western Pacific Region from health education (since the 1970s), tobacco control legislation (1982), the ban on smokeless tobacco (1980s), bans on overt advertising (1980s and 1990s), the creation of smoke-free public and work areas (2007) and the increase in the graphic pack warning size to 85 per cent (2017) to the current proposal to ban electronic cigarettes and other new tobacco products.

"Looking to the future, it is hoped that Hong Kong will soon be one of the first jurisdictions in the world to reach single-digit smoking prevalence, and continue to contribute its experience to other parts of the world."

The theme of World No Tobacco Day 2019 is "Tobacco and Lung Health". According to an earlier study, a total of 6 154 deaths (aged 35 and over) in Hong Kong in 2011 were attributed to active smoking while 672 deaths were attributed to second-hand smoke exposure. Evidence shows that smoking is the primary cause for lung cancer (the leading cause of cancer in Hong Kong) and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, claiming the lives of 3 890 people and causing 29 000 inpatient discharges and deaths in Hong Kong in 2017 respectively. According to the WHO, over two-thirds of global lung cancer deaths are attributed to smoking.

Smoking contributes to 14 per cent of all deaths from non-communicable diseases (NCDs). On average, tobacco users lose 15 years of life and up to half of all tobacco users die of tobacco-related causes. With a view to reducing the burden of NCDs, including disability and premature death, in Hong Kong, the Government announced "Towards 2025: Strategy and Action Plan to Prevent and Control NCDs in Hong Kong" in May last year. Among the targets set for 2025, the Government aims to achieve a 30 per cent relative reduction in the prevalence of current tobacco use in persons aged 15 years or above.

The DH called on smokers to support World No Tobacco Day by quitting smoking as early as possible for the health of themselves and their families and friends. Smokers who intend to quit smoking can call the DH's Integrated Smoking Cessation Hotline on 1833 183. The hotline is operated by registered nurses, providing professional counselling services on smoking cessation. Cases will be referred to smoking cessation services for follow-up when needed.

