

CHP reviews local HIV/AIDS situation in 2019

A total of 565 cases of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection were reported to the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) in 2019, compared with 624 in 2018.

Reviewing the latest HIV/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (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 so as to reduce the risk of acquiring HIV.

"Despite a decrease in the number of reports of HIV infection in recent years when compared to the peak in 2015, a concentrated epidemic among vulnerable groups, such as young men who have sex with men, warrants our sustained attention."

Of the 565 HIV cases reported in 2019 which involved 479 males and 86 females, 331 (59 per cent) acquired the infection via homosexual or bisexual contact, 128 (23 per cent) via heterosexual contact, five (0.9 per cent) via drug injection and two (0.4 per cent) via perinatal infection. The routes of transmission of the remaining 99 cases have yet to be determined due to incomplete information upon notification.

In the fourth quarter of 2019, 130 new cases of HIV infection were reported, taking the cumulative total of HIV infections reported locally to 10 280 since 1984.

Of the 130 HIV cases reported in the abovementioned quarter which involved 109 males and 21 females, 79 acquired the infection via homosexual or bisexual contact, 26 via heterosexual contact and one via drug injection. The routes of transmission of the remaining 24 cases have yet to be determined due to inadequate information.

The new cases of the quarter were mainly reported by four major sources: public hospitals, clinics and laboratories (48 cases); private hospitals, clinics and laboratories (26 cases); the DH's Social Hygiene Clinics (22 cases) and AIDS service organisations (22 cases). Also, 98 of the HIV-infected people (77 per cent) have already received HIV specialist services from the DH or the Hospital Authority.

In addition, 43 new cases of AIDS were reported in this quarter, of which 22 cases (51 per cent) were attributed to homosexual or bisexual contact and 21 cases (49 per cent) were related to heterosexual contact. In this quarter, the most common AIDS-defining illness was Pneumocystis pneumonia, a kind of chest infection.

Since 1985, a cumulative total of 2 118 confirmed AIDS cases have been

reported in Hong Kong.

The spokesman said, "HIV is the cause of AIDS and, without treatment, about half of HIV-infected people will progress to AIDS within 10 years. On the contrary, early HIV treatment with antiretroviral drugs helps prevent AIDS and its complications. It also improves the quality of life and prolongs survival of those infected. Notably, people with HIV who achieve sustained viral suppression by antiretroviral drugs have a negligible chance of passing on the virus through sex.

"Members of the public with a history of unsafe sex should take an HIV antibody test early. HIV-positive people should seek specialist care as soon as possible."

The public may visit the following pages for more information on HIV/AIDS: the DH's Virtual AIDS Office (www.aids.gov.hk), the Red Ribbon Centre (www.rrc.gov.hk), the AIDS Hotline website (www.27802211.com) and the Gay Men HIV Information website (www.21171069.gov.hk).