

CHP reviews local HIV/AIDS situation in 2020 (with photos)

A total of 505 cases of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection were reported to the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) in 2020, compared with 565 in 2019.

Reviewing the latest HIV/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) situation in Hong Kong at a press conference today (March 2), the Acting Consultant (Special Preventive Programme) of the CHP, Dr Ho Chi-hin 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 505 HIV cases reported in 2020 which involved 418 males and 87 females, 272 (54 per cent) acquired the infection via homosexual or bisexual contact, 137 (27 per cent) via heterosexual contact and two (0.4 per cent) via drug injection. The routes of transmission of the remaining 94 cases have yet to be determined due to incomplete information upon notification.

In the fourth quarter of 2020, 110 new cases of HIV infection were reported, taking the cumulative total of HIV infections reported locally to 10 785 since 1984.

Of the 110 HIV cases reported in the above-mentioned quarter which involved 93 males and 17 females, 53 acquired the infection via homosexual or bisexual contact, 27 via heterosexual contact and one via drug injection. The routes of transmission of the remaining 29 cases have yet to be determined due to inadequate information.

The new cases of the quarter were mainly reported by three major sources: public hospitals, clinics and laboratories (59 cases); the DH's AIDS Unit (14 cases); and private hospitals, clinics and laboratories (13 cases). Also, 78 of the HIV-infected people (73 per cent) have already received HIV specialist services under the DH or the Hospital Authority.

In addition, 22 new cases of AIDS were reported in this quarter, of which 10 cases (45 per cent) were attributed to homosexual or bisexual contact, and 11 cases (50 per cent) were related to heterosexual contact. The route of transmission of the remaining one case (5 per cent) has yet to be determined due to incomplete information upon notification. In this quarter, the most common AIDS-defining illness was *Pneumocystis pneumonia*, a kind of chest infection.

Since 1985, a cumulative total of 2 230 confirmed AIDS cases have been reported in Hong Kong.

Dr Ho 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 to an undetectable level by antiretroviral drugs have no 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. They can call the DH's AIDS Hotline (2780 2211) for a free, anonymous and confidential HIV test. HIV-positive people should seek specialist care as soon as possible."

The public may visit the following webpages 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).

