

DH launches first tool for assessing social cognitive abilities of Cantonese-speaking children (with photo)

The Department of Health (DH) today (October 23) announced the launch of the Hong Kong Scales for Assessment of Theory of Mind (HKAToM), the first locally developed, standardised and norm-referenced assessment instrument which enables professionals engaged in child development to understand the social cognitive abilities of Cantonese-speaking children between the age of 5 years and 12 years 1 month.

Relevant professionals in Hong Kong usually make reference to overseas studies on theory of mind (ToM) in children or use materials adapted from theories that have been well studied overseas to assess relevant abilities of local children. However, as culture and language play an important role in shaping the development of ToM, using overseas tools and materials may not be ideal in assessing local children.

In view of this, a multidisciplinary professional team of the DH's Child Assessment Service (CAS) has teamed up with the Faculty of Education, University of Hong Kong, to develop the HKAToM based on scientific evidence. This newly launched assessment tool is designed to cater to the needs of local Cantonese-speaking children so that qualified professionals in the field of child development can examine children's ToM more precisely, providing additional reference for clinical diagnosis and planning of effective intervention. It also helps promote research in the area.

The HKAToM was developed through stringent standardised procedures. The framework and test items were designed with reference to Western theoretical background, overseas and local studies, as well as clinical experiences of professionals. Following a pilot test, the tool was normed on a widely stratified sample of lower kindergarten to Primary Six children from 5 years to 12 years 1 month of age who were recruited from kindergartens, nursery schools, and primary schools across the territory. Data collected was used to produce a standardised assessment tool with a local norm reference.

The HKAToM is intended to be used by professionals including clinical psychologists, educational psychologists, developmental-behavioural paediatricians, paediatric neurologists, psychiatrists and speech therapists working in the public sector as well as those from non-government organisations and the private sector. Users should be fluent in Cantonese to meet the standardised requirements for administration of the tool. The DH organised a web-based dissemination seminar on the HKAToM yesterday (October 22) for professionals of related local sectors.

The HKAToM will be sold to eligible registered users at \$3,930 per

set. Interested parties may visit the CAS website (www.dhcas.gov.hk) for details.

