

Editorial

Dissemination reports are concise informative reports of health-related research supported by the Health and Medical Research Fund administered by the Health Bureau. In this edition, we present 13 dissemination reports of projects related to alcohol control, cancer, healthcare technology, infectious diseases, and reproductive health. In particular, research findings of three projects may provide insights to enhance clinical practices and help inform health policy formulation in Hong Kong.

According to the World Health Organization, alcohol consumption is a causal factor in more than 200 diseases, injuries, and other health conditions.¹ The public health effort in raising awareness of the health and social problems caused by harmful use of alcohol is counterbalanced by positive images from alcohol industry marketing. Evidence-based interventions are required to reduce harmful drinking, especially in young people. Kim et al² aimed to determine the proportion of Hong Kong young adults who have been exposed to various types of social media marketing (SMM) and the associations between alcohol SMM exposure, alcohol expectancies, and drinking behaviours. They found that exposure to alcohol SMM was associated with all past-month drinking behaviours and future drinking intentions. Male, university-educated, and having lower monthly household income were more likely to be exposed to alcohol SMM. However, despite the widespread alcohol SMM, most young adults participating in the study considered that no restriction on alcohol SMM was necessary.

Hong Kong is rapidly transitioning to an ageing society and the pace of ageing has become faster in recent years, mainly due to post-war baby boomers entering old age. In 2020, the incidences of cancers climbed steadily as the population aged,³ and cancer burden is expected to rise. Age-period-cohort models can be used to summarise information that is routinely collected by cancer registries and registries

for other diseases. Using an age-period-cohort model, Wong et al⁴ aimed to project the incidences of common cancers in Hong Kong, identify significant changes in cancer disease trends over time, and quantify the effect of demographic changes on future cancer incidences. They found that incidences of breast, endometrial, and thyroid cancers in women as well as incidences of colorectal and prostate cancer in men have increased over the past 30 years and are expected to continue to increase. Population growth and ageing have contributed to these increases in cancer incidences and are expected to continue to do so. Primary prevention by promoting healthier lifestyles and earlier cancer detection is recommended.

Chronic viral hepatitis is a risk factor for development of hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC). According to the Hong Kong Cancer Registry,³ liver cancer (including neoplasm of liver and intrahepatic bile ducts) was the fifth most common cancer in Hong Kong in 2020. The Hong Kong Viral Hepatitis Action Plan 2020-2024 aims to reduce the burden of chronic viral hepatitis through effective prevention, treatment, and control of viral hepatitis. Many HCC risk prediction models are based on regression analysis. Machine-learning approaches that maximise data use and minimise bias are increasingly used for model development. Wong et al⁵ aimed to develop prediction models using machine-learning algorithms to define the risk levels of HCC in patients with chronic viral hepatitis. They found that the machine-learning models generated accurate risk scores for HCC in patients with chronic viral hepatitis. The newly developed HCC ridge score was consistently more accurate in predicting HCC in chronic viral hepatitis patients than other commonly used methods. Such machine-learning methods may be useful for incorporating into electronic health systems to guide cancer surveillance strategies and reduce cancer death.

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