

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 11 dissemination reports of projects related to traditional Chinese medicine, health promotion, infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases, and children's health. In particular, research findings of three projects may provide insights to enhance clinical practices and help inform health policy formulation in Hong Kong.

Anti-psychotic therapy for schizophrenia spectrum disorders (SSD) may induce metabolic syndrome. Berberine, a natural plant alkaloid derived from traditional Chinese herbal medicine, has been found to have weight loss, anti-diabetic, and anti-hyperlipidaemic properties. Chan et al¹ conducted a randomised, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial to evaluate the efficacy and safety of adjunctive berberine in controlling weight gain and improving other metabolic variables among 113 patients with SSD who had developed metabolic syndrome. They found that compared with placebo, berberine treatment led to substantial reductions in body weight, body mass index, diastolic blood pressure, total cholesterol, low-density lipoprotein, fasting glucose, and glycated haemoglobin at 6 weeks and 12 weeks post-treatment. They concluded that berberine, as an adjuvant, was safe and effective in reducing anti-psychotic-associated weight gain and improving metabolic syndrome without exacerbating psychotic symptoms or inducing other adverse effects.

Human papilloma virus (HPV) can cause genital warts and penile/anal cancer in men. Men who have sex with men (MSM) are at higher risk of contracting HPV and related diseases. HPV vaccination is very effective

in preventing genital warts and cancer in MSM; however, vaccine uptake is very low among MSM in Hong Kong. Wang et al² evaluated the efficacy of two online theory-based interventions with and without motivational interviewing via phone in increasing the rate of complete (three-dose) HPV vaccination among 624 Hong Kong Chinese MSM. They found that 75 participants received a full course of HPV vaccination during 24-month period following the intervention. HPV vaccine uptake was significantly higher among the group receiving health communication plus motivational interviewing compared with the control group. Health communication alone was somewhat effective in increasing HPV vaccination compared with control, but the increase did not reach statistical significance. The intervention has been integrated into existing human immunodeficiency (HIV) testing and counselling services implemented by a non-governmental organisation focused on HIV prevention in Hong Kong.

Lupus nephritis is a serious manifestation of systemic lupus erythematosus; long-term monitoring to predict and prevent clinical relapses is challenging. Changes in B-cell-related cytokines may offer a convenient biomarker for monitoring asymptomatic serological reactivation (ASR). Yap et al³ conducted a randomised controlled trial of pre-emptive immunosuppressive treatment (tapered doses of prednisolone and/or azathioprine/mycophenolate mofetil) among 43 patients with lupus nephritis experiencing ASR. They found that pre-emptive increase in immunosuppression could reduce renal relapse among participants and was well-tolerated. B-cell signatures, especially B lymphocyte activation factor, may serve as biomarkers for treatment-response monitoring.

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References

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