

EDITORIAL

We are delighted to bring you another series of dissemination reports of research projects supported by the *Health Services Research Fund (HSRF)** and the *Health Care and Promotion Fund (HCPF)*. This edition features projects related to ageing, cancer, mental health, and obstetric practice. Several projects are highlighted due to their significant findings, impact on health care delivery, and practice and/or contribution to health policy formulation in Hong Kong.

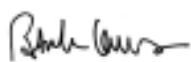
Falls in the elderly are a major cause of injury, hospitalisation, and death. Chu et al¹ conducted a prospective study on a relatively large cohort of community-dwelling elderly people. The study was significant in that it yielded valuable local data on the prevalence and consequences of such falls, highlighting the scale of the public health problem and the financial burden it places on health services. The study also identified a number of risk factors associated with falls in the elderly. Although a causal relationship remains to be confirmed, some of these factors are potentially modifiable. They included both intrinsic health problems, such as impaired lower limb function and balance that might be addressed through targeted exercise regimens, and environmental aspects, such as the layout of the home and the presence of objects/situations that increase the likelihood of falls. Identification of such factors could help the development of interventions to reduce fall risks, potentially resulting in substantial health care cost savings.

People with, or recovering from, psychiatric disorders often have great difficulty obtaining and remaining in gainful employment. Their job maintenance skills in simulated work situations, as rated by rehabilitation staff, are recognised as one of the best predictors of future work performance and job tenure. Siu et al² developed and validated a Chinese version of such a rating scale (the Work Personality Profile [WPP]) and used it to successfully predict workplace outcomes for psychiatric clients in a variety of vocational rehabilitation settings. The findings of this study aided the development of much-needed local evaluation tools in the area of mental health. Indeed, the Chinese WPP has now been adopted by occupational therapy departments throughout Hong Kong as a vocational assessment tool for aiding more appropriate job placements for psychiatric clients.

Homozygous α -thalassaemia-1 is a fatal disease, with most fetuses stillborn or dying shortly after birth. Genetic techniques to diagnose the condition prenatally are readily available but require invasive sampling of chorionic villi or amniocytes, which carries inherent risks, and the test results are not available immediately. Lam et al³ studied the feasibility of detecting homozygous α -thalassaemia-1 non-invasively, early in gestation, using ultrasound examination. They found that this technique was highly sensitive and specific when performed at 12 to 13 weeks' gestation. While studies in larger populations to replicate the findings are needed, the project provided evidence that the technique may have the potential to help reduce the use of invasive testing and its inherent risks for the prenatal diagnosis of homozygous α -thalassaemia-1.

We hope you find this selection of dissemination reports informative and enjoyable to read. These dissemination reports and the projects' full reports may be downloaded individually from the Research Fund Secretariat website (<http://www.hwfb.gov.hk/grants>), where more information about the funds, including application procedures, can also be found.

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2. Siu AM, Yau MK, Lam PC. Situational assessment as a predictor of employment outcomes in people with chronic psychiatric illness. *Hong Kong Med J* 2007;13(Suppl 1):32-5.
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* The HSRF was succeeded by the *Health and Health Services Research Fund (HHSRF)* in 2002.