

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, health education, health services, and women's health. Several projects are highlighted due to their significant findings, impacts on health care delivery and practice, and/or contributions to health policy formulation in Hong Kong.

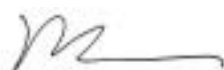
Longitudinal cohort studies provide a rich source of information about the antecedents of disease originating during life. Schooling et al¹ studied a large cohort of elderly ethnic Chinese enrolled at Elderly Health Centres in Hong Kong to gauge the effects of obesity and health status on mortality. The mean length of follow-up was 4.1 years. The relationship between mortality and body mass index (BMI) was complex. In healthy, never-smoking older Chinese, there was a positive relationship between obesity and mortality, comparable with that found in younger adults. Nonetheless, in older Chinese with poor health and a high mortality rate, there was an inverse, dose-response relationship between BMI and mortality, strongest in those with the worst health. This study is valuable because it emphasises the importance of promoting smoking cessation by Elderly Health Services and the management of depressive symptoms and highlights the importance of monitoring both obesity and underweight in elderly Chinese people. Apart from setting the stage for further studies, this study also impacts on health system policies and clinical practice by providing useful information to legislators and encouraging a change of behaviour in practitioners caring for the elderly.

Childhood injuries are not only a major concern for parents and guardians but also place a considerable burden on the health care system—accounting for 3.1 deaths per 100 000 children aged 1 to 4 years in Hong Kong. Chow et al² studied the effectiveness of home visits by paraprofessionals as a means of promoting active prevention strategies against injuries among caregivers of infants and toddlers. Families in the intervention group were recruited from an accident and emergency department during a visit for unintentional child injury and received quarterly visits over the subsequent 12 months for active guidance on injury prevention and were followed up monthly by telephone. Despite a substantial loss to follow-up and the outbreak of SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) adversely affecting the willingness of parents to accept home visits, the study was able to demonstrate that the home visit concept is an effective means of reducing unintentional injuries. The study was also useful for fostering collaboration among health care workers, academics, social workers, volunteers, and policy-makers who forged a multidisciplinary partnership to further the development of child injury prevention programmes.

Bone loss is generally considered an inevitable consequence of menopause. Ho et al³ studied the changes in bone mineral density (BMD) and the effect of diet, physical activity, and reproductive factors on the BMD of over 400 women during the transition to menopause. Maintaining a lean body mass through appropriate diet and weight-bearing physical activity was protective against bone loss. This study was useful in that it provided the first population-based study on the prevalence of osteoporosis and bone changes and so acts as a reference standard for future research in this area. The results of this study may influence health outcomes and clinical practice by increasing awareness and knowledge of health activities in relation to osteoporosis among both the general public and health professionals.

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.fhb.gov.hk/grants>), where more information about the funds, including application procedures, can also be found.

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* The HSRF was succeeded by the *Health and Health Services Research Fund (HHSRF)* in 2002.