

EDITORIAL

Dissemination reports are concise informative reports of health-related research supported by funds administered by the Food and Health Bureau, namely *Research Fund for the Control of Infectious Diseases* (RFCID), *Health and Health Services Research Fund* (HHSRF) and *Health Services Research Fund* (HSRF). In this issue, 10 dissemination reports of funded projects related to breast cancer, respiratory infectious diseases and stroke are presented. Three projects in particular are highlighted due to their potentially significant findings, impact on healthcare delivery and practice, and/or their contribution to health policy formulation in Hong Kong.

Breast cancer is the most common cancer affecting women in Hong Kong. Early treatment is associated with a high cure rate. Delay in treatment following discovery of symptoms allows the disease to become more widely disseminated throughout the body and more resistant to effective treatment, thus contributing to high mortality. Lam et al¹ evaluated the barriers to seeking treatment in a small group of Chinese women in Hong Kong using a grounded theory-based qualitative approach. Despite adequate knowledge about breast cancer, the most common reason for delayed presentation was unfamiliarity with atypical and painless symptoms. The authors suggest that discussion of atypical symptoms should be included in education about breast cancer. Utilisation barriers included cost, uncertainty about referral pathways, competing priorities and embarrassment.

Acute respiratory infection accounts for about 40% of all paediatric admissions and two thirds of those admitted are under the age of 5 years. Sung et al² compared the usefulness of nasal swabs and nasopharyngeal aspirates (NPA) for the detection of a wide range of respiratory viruses and atypical bacteria in this age-group using three different diagnostic tests: immunofluorescence (IF), culture, and polymerase chain reaction (PCR). The authors found that changing to more child-friendly nasal swabs (as opposed to NPA) resulted in loss of sensitivity when IF testing was used, particularly for influenza A, influenza B and respiratory syncytial virus. Multiplex PCR tests are capable of reliably and quickly detecting a wide range of respiratory pathogens in nasal swabs. The investigators suggest that further studies are required to assess the potential time and cost advantages of this new diagnostic method over direct IF testing of NPA specimens.

Stroke is a major cause of disability and handicap in adults. As the incidence of first stroke increases and mortality decreases, more stroke survivors are returning home rather than entering in-patient rehabilitation programmes. Hui-Chan et al³ recognised the need for home-based rehabilitation programmes to provide ongoing low-cost programmes that can maintain or even improve the performance of these patients. The investigators developed and evaluated a home-based rehabilitation programme using a combination of transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) with task-related training (TRT) in 109 Chinese subjects with a mean post-stroke period of 4.7 years. In post-stroke patients, both interventions together achieved superior functional results compared to either intervention used alone. The authors note that TENS is particularly useful as complementary therapy in a home-based TRT programme for patients with chronic stroke.

We hope you will enjoy this selection of research dissemination reports, of which electronic copies and the corresponding full reports can be downloaded individually from the Research Fund Secretariat website (<http://www.fhb.gov.hk/grants>). Researchers interested in the funds administered by the Food and Health Bureau may visit the website for detailed information about application procedures.

Supplement co-editors

Victoria Wong

Dr Victoria Wong
Associate Consultant (Research Office)
Food and Health Bureau

RA Collins

Dr Richard A Collins
Scientific Review Director (Research Office)
Food and Health Bureau

Janice Johnston

Dr Janice M Johnston
Consultant (Research Office)
Food and Health Bureau

References

1. Lam WW, Fielding R, Chan M, Or A. Factors influencing delayed presentation with symptomatic breast cancer in Hong Kong Chinese women. *Hong Kong Med J* 2009;15(Suppl 4):4-7.
2. Sung RY, Chan PK, Choi KC, Li AM, Nelson EA. A comparative study of nasopharyngeal aspirate and nasal swab specimens for the diagnosis of acute viral respiratory infection. *Hong Kong Med J* 2009;15(Suppl 4):24-7.
3. Hui-Chan CW, Ng SS, Mak MK. Effectiveness of a home-based rehabilitation programme on lower limb functions after stroke. *Hong Kong Med J* 2009;15(Suppl 4):42-6.