

Dissemination reports are concise informative reports of health-related research supported by funds administered by the Food and Health Bureau, namely the *Research Fund for the Control of Infectious Diseases* (RFCID), the *Health and Health Services Research Fund* (HHSRF) and the *Health Services Research Fund* (HSRF). In this issue, 11 dissemination reports of funded projects related to mental health, pain and respiratory infectious diseases are presented. In particular, three projects are highlighted due to their potentially significant findings, impact on health care delivery and practice, and/or contribution to health policy formulation in Hong Kong.

Between 2000 and 2006, 166 suicidal attempts were reported in 26 public hospitals, in which 34 patients died. Frontline nurses have a crucial role to play in suicide prevention and management. Chan et al<sup>1</sup> evaluated the effects of an education programme (8.5 hours of learning activity) intended to enhance nurses' knowledge, attitude, and competence in dealing with such patients (who have attempted suicide or have suicidal ideation) and their family members. A total of 110 registered nurses from medical and surgical units were randomly assigned to the study and control groups. Although the participants found the programme useful and it enhanced their knowledge, there were no significant differences between the two groups for any of the outcome measures. The authors noted that nursing manpower, practical guidelines, interdisciplinary collaboration, and physical layout of the ward can prevent nurses from carrying out their roles and responsibilities, and need to be addressed. These are important considerations when planning further nurse-led programmes.

Neck pain is a common medical condition for which many causes have been identified. Psychosocial factors may play a significant role in its development. Of these, fear-avoidance beliefs have been identified as the most powerful cognitive variables in predicting disability and treatment outcomes of patients with low back pain. Chiu et al<sup>2</sup> adapted, translated and validated the Fear-Avoidance Beliefs Questionnaire (FABQ) for Chinese patients with neck pain. The validated FABQ was then tested for reliability and construct validity in 476 patients attending four physiotherapy out-patient departments in different regions of Hong Kong. The investigators found that fear-avoidance beliefs are an important psychosocial measure for predicting future disability and return to complete work capacity (immediately and 3 months after physiotherapy). The validated FABQ will facilitate further research on the effects of fear-avoidance behaviour in patients with neck pain and help provide a better service for and evaluation of them. It may also facilitate cross-cultural studies on this common problem between western and Chinese populations.

Acute upper respiratory tract infection (URTI) is the most common illness leading to consultation in primary care. In Hong Kong, Chinese herbal medicine is commonly used for treating URTI, but reports on its effectiveness and side-effects are scanty. Lam et al<sup>3</sup> conducted a prospective double-blind randomised placebo-controlled trial in 327 URTI patients on the use of two Chinese herbal remedies to determine if they could significantly enhance the resolution (reduce the duration and/or severity) of symptoms and quality of life. Despite being well tolerated, neither remedy was effective in this respect. The authors noted that randomised double-blind placebo-controlled trials are a suitable objective methodology to determine the effectiveness and side-effects of Chinese herbal medicines.

We hope you will enjoy this selection of research dissemination reports. Electronic copies can be downloaded 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.

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## References

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3. Lam CL, Wong W, Fong DY. Chinese herbal medicine in the treatment of acute upper respiratory tract infection: a randomised, double blind, placebo-controlled clinical trial. *Hong Kong Med J* 2009;15(Suppl 6):30-4.