

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) and the *Health and Health Services Research Fund* (HHSRF). In this edition, 11 dissemination reports of projects related to health services research, severe acute respiratory syndrome, and sexually transmitted infections 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.

Chronic pain, insomnia, and fatigue are important public health problems but are poorly documented in Chinese populations. Fielding and Wong¹ conducted a cross-sectional, population-based, observational study via structured telephone interviews on more than 5000 randomly selected ethnic Chinese adults. This study aimed to determine the prevalence and severity of chronic pain, fatigue, and insomnia in the general adult population of Hong Kong, identify associated factors, and quantify the health care utilisation associated with these conditions during the preceding 3 months. The authors found that these chronic symptoms affected a substantial proportion of the general population, with as many as a quarter of the adult population experiencing at least one of them. There is a considerable burden to society in terms of individual suffering and to the health care system. Risk factors for the development of these chronic symptoms included older age, female gender, higher levels of education, and other health problems.

The severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) epidemic struck Hong Kong in 2003. Mental health morbidity of patients was reported during the acute and early discharge period. However, the impact of SARS did not end with the resolution of the infection. During rehabilitation, many patients faced psychosocial difficulties including stigmatisation, grief, unemployment, functional impairment, and medical co-morbidities. Despite improvements in their physical condition, their stress and psychiatric symptoms persisted for up to 12 months. Among SARS survivors, chronic fatigue was common. Wing and Leung² investigated *inter alia* the prevalence and associated risk factors for psychiatric disorders and chronic fatigue syndrome in SARS survivors. Nearly half of the SARS survivors had one or more psychiatric disorders in their lifetime—most of whom still had the disorder 3 years after the SARS epidemic. Chronic fatigue was common among SARS survivors, and SARS was not simply an infection but a disastrous experience for these patients.

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) remain a major public health problem in Hong Kong. Sex workers are reservoirs and vectors for the transmission of STIs in the community. To formulate prevention strategies, the prevalence and risk factors of STIs among asymptomatic female sex workers (FSW) should be determined. Wong et al³ recruited 511 FSWs aged 18 to 55 years from the well woman clinic of a non-governmental organisation. The prevalence of hepatitis B surface antigen positivity, syphilis, gonorrhoea, chlamydia, and HIV were 8.5%, 1.8%, 1.8%, 4.6%, and 0.2%, respectively. Risk factors for STIs included alcohol consumption, place of origin, a history of termination of pregnancy, higher education level, having multiple partners, and being a non-smoker. Importantly, the reported inconsistent use of condoms when having sex with regular partners among FSWs may have a bridging effect in the spread of STIs to other population groups. The authors note that continued surveillance of STIs in FSWs in Hong Kong is important and suggest that a coherent policy and holistic approach is necessary to control the spread of STIs in the community.

We hope you will enjoy this selection of research dissemination reports. Electronic copies of these dissemination reports 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.

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