

Editorial

Dissemination reports are concise informative reports of health-related research supported by the Health and Medical Research Fund (and its predecessor funds) administered by the Food and Health Bureau. In this edition, we present 11 dissemination reports of projects related to cancer, infectious diseases, and neurology. In particular, three projects are highlighted due to their potentially significant findings, impact on healthcare delivery and practice, and/or contribution to health policy formulation in Hong Kong.

Oesophageal squamous cell carcinoma (OSCC) is highly metastatic and often fatal. The majority of patients do not survive for more than 1 year after diagnosis. Early detection would allow prompt initiation of treatment, which could save or extend lives. Lung et al¹ aimed to determine if serum amyloid A could be useful as an early biomarker for OSCC. Using genomic and blood samples of more than 220 patients with OSCC, they found that serum amyloid A was 100% sensitivity and 100% specificity for early detection of OSCC, with plasma samples having higher sensitivity and specificity than serum samples.

Every year influenza virus infections are responsible for hundreds of excess deaths and thousands of excess hospitalisations. It is important to differentiate infection incidence from severity. In epidemics, young children usually have higher incidence and elderly people have higher severity. Cowling et al² aimed to estimate the age-specific attack rate of influenza A and B in a representative group of households between late 2012 and early

2015 and evaluate the risk factors for influenza virus infection. Over the course of five local influenza epidemics, the overall incidence of infection was about 5% to 11% for influenza A and about 4% for influenza B, with incidence in children being relatively low. Age and chronic diseases were significantly associated with the risk of infection.

As the ageing population increases, the burden from physical and cognitive healthcare needs will increase. Dementia is one of the most devastating and costly diseases facing elderly people and their carers. Wong et al³ aimed to determine whether foreign language learning (English) was effective in boosting cognitive reserve and promoting healthy cognitive function and whether it was superior to other established cognitively stimulating activities in 137 Cantonese-speaking local elders with mild cognitive impairment. Overall, foreign language training was more effective than music listening in boosting cognitive reserve and promoting healthy cognitive function, and was more effective than crossword and puzzles in reducing the risk of cognitive deficits and in improving a broad range of cognitive functions.

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 (<https://rfs2.fhb.gov.hk/>). Researchers interested in the funds administered by the Food and Health Bureau also may visit the website for detailed information about application procedures.

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2. Cowling BJ, Peiris JSM, Kwok KO. Influenza virus infections in Hong Kong in 2013-14: a community-based longitudinal seroepidemiological study. *Hong Kong Med J* 2019;25(Suppl 7):S23-6.
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