



**THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG
FACULTY OF MEDICINE**

**香港大學
醫學院**

September 9, 2005

Miss Maggie Chiu
Clerk to Bills Committee on Smoking
(Public Health) (Amendment) Bill 2005
Legislative Council Secretariat
3/F Citibank Tower
3 Garden Road
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Miss Chiu,

Smoking (Public Health) (Amendment) Bill 2005
(Ref:CB2/BC/11/04)

I am pleased to enclose the reply slip and the written submission of the Faculty of Medicine, The University of Hong Kong in response to the Smoking (Public Health) (Amendment) Bill 2005. A soft copy will be sent to you by email.

Thank you for your attention.

Yours sincerely,

(Ms) Liza Tang
Faculty Secretary

Encl.

**Faculty of Medicine, the University of Hong Kong Submission to the
LegCo Bills Committee on Smoking (Public Health)
(Amendment) Bill 2005**

Introduction

1. The Faculty of Medicine, The University of Hong Kong is pleased to provide views on the Smoking (Public Health) (Amendment) Bill 2005 (“the Bill”).
2. The Department of Community Medicine, School of Public Health of the University of Hong Kong submitted a report (LC Paper No. CB(2)2097/04-05(01)) at the Committee meeting on July 4, 2005. The research found that every year about 7,000 lives are claimed by smoking or passive smoking, and over HK\$5 billion loss in health care and productivity is caused by tobacco-related diseases, not including the value of the lives lost through premature deaths.
3. The Faculty strongly supports the Bill which extends the statutory smoking ban to more premises, indoor working places and public places, and increases control on packaging, labelling, advertisement and promotion of tobacco products. Tightening of smoking control in public places is essential if we are to create a smoke-free living environment, thus protecting the public from hazardous consequences of second hand tobacco smoke.

Rationale for Support of Tightening Smoking Control

4. Active and passive smoking are both important causes of serious acute and chronic diseases, which often lead to illness episodes, time lost from school or work, hospital admissions and premature death.
5. Every year over 7,000 deaths are caused by smoking, among which studies by the Department of Community Medicine in HKU have shown that about 5,600 deaths are attributed to active smoking and about 1,300 to passive smoking.
6. Further analysis by the Department of Community Medicine have estimated the value of the direct and indirect costs of tobacco at HK\$5.3 billion per year but this does not include the value of the lives lost (each cost at HK\$10 million) which totals HK\$69 billion.
7. In addition to the direct costs of health care, the social costs of tobacco include the time lost from

school and work, and the additional burden on families and social and welfare organizations in caring those sick from tobacco induced disease.

8. Most of the cost of tobacco falls on the public sector and nearly one third of the health care costs is due to the harm caused by exposure to second hand smoke.

Recommendations

9. The estimates of both health and economic cost point to the urgent need for comprehensive and effective preventive interventions on smoking.
10. In addition to the measures proposed in the Bill, we would emphasise the evidence that higher tobacco tax reduces both consumption of tobacco and costs of the harm caused by smoking and passive smoking, and provides revenue to Government to support enforcement of legislation on tobacco. Cigarettes are relatively cheap in Hong Kong and duty levels are inappropriately low. Recent statements from the Financial Secretary clearly indicate that the Government still does not accept the need for stronger fiscal measures to support tobacco control strategies.
11. When all of the relevant costs are included in calculating the real cost of tobacco, the price of a pack of cigarettes is significantly lower than the real cost to the society. On the basis of the number of smokers, the average daily consumption, the direct costs of health care and the value of the lives lost, it is estimated that the real cost to the community is at least HK\$300 per packet of 20 cigarettes. Tobacco control measures including legislative and fiscal measure are needed to eliminate the health and economic inequalities caused by tobacco promotion.

Conclusions

12. The Faculty supports the Bill in principle and wishes to see the Bill enacted and implemented as soon as practicable. However we also point to the need for weaknesses in the original consultation document to be remedied in the drafting of the Bill.

Faculty of Medicine, the University of Hong Kong
September 12, 2005