

香港醫學會的信頭
Letterhead of The Hong Kong Medical Association

PRESS RELEASE

June 5, 1995

PREVENT IS BETTER
Blood alcohol level should set at 50mg/ 100ml
to prevent drunken driving accidents;
HKMA reiterates

To avoid possible harm posed by drunken drivers and protect the safety of other road users, the Hong Kong Medical Association urges the legislature to set the legal limit of blood alcohol concentration at 50mg/ 100ml which is an international standard adopted by the World Medical Association at its 44th World Medical Assembly. The 50mg/ 100ml was widely adopted by numerous countries all over the world, eg. USA, Japan, Korea and Australia.

The Road Transport (Amendment) Bill, which is about to be finalised, proposed a loose standard of 80mg/ 100 ml to detect drunken drivers. The HKMA considers the slacken limit serves only punitive purposes and neglect the more important goal of accident prevention.

According to research, alcohol affects the central nervous system, blunting perception & co-ordination and impaired one's ability to detect risk. A 50 mg/ 100ml concentration level will already begin to affect driver's ability to identify risk while 80mg/ 100 ml is likely to impair significantly the drivers' ability to drive. For preventive purpose, it is important that drivers who have been drinking be discouraged from getting behind the wheel at a time when they can still perceive the risk involved subjectively.

Setting the legal level at 80 mg/100ml will only serve to punish those driving at such high alcohol level, with their driving ability significantly affected, and probably only after accident has occurred. People is allowed to go to an alcohol content at which they may not even realise the risk they are exposing themselves and others to. They themselves will not be able to stop driving when their alcohol content are approaching dangerous level.

On the other hand, setting the level at 50mg/100ml will stop people from getting to a stage where they will not be able to stop themselves. This will serve good preventive purpose in minimising tragedy.

Besides, blood alcohol level may have dropped below the legal limit at the time of blood test as it takes time to get the driver to hospitals or laboratory to conduct blood test.

The HKMA believes that “accident prevention” should be the rationale behind the setting of a legal limit to blood alcohol level. Hence, the limit of 50mg/ 100 ml is a better choice that should be adopted by the legislature.

Notes to editors:

The Hong Kong Medical Association, founded in 1920, aims to bring together Hong Kong’s government, institutional, university and private medical practitioners for an effective exchange of views and co-ordination of efforts. The foremost objective of the Association is to safeguard and promote public health. The Association speaks collectively for its members and aims to keep its members abreast of medical ethics, issues and advances around the world. In fulfilling these goals, the association hopes to better serve the people of Hong Kong.

Enquiris: Vanessa Ko

Tel - 527 8941