

Billy R. Leung

Clerk to Panel on Health Services
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central
via electronic submission: panel_hs@legco.gov.hk

February 14, 2018

Dear Members of the Panel on Health Services:

**Re: HIV and AIDS response measures formulated in relation
to the Recommended HIV/AIDS Strategies for Hong Kong (2017-2021)**

1. I am pleased to provide my views in response to the invitation for submission concerning the subjected topic.

Need of providing better comprehensive sexuality education to school children

2. The Recommended HIV/AIDS Strategies for Hong Kong (2017-2021) ("the Strategies") notes that there has been an increase of HIV infection particularly among young men having sex with men aged 20-29 and below 20.¹ This is a disturbing figure for any health authorities.
3. Having met almost all the indicators noted under Table 1 of Annex I of the current Strategies, the question remains as to why the rise among this group in question continues.
4. In its latest 5-yearly Report on Youth Sexuality Study, the Family Planning Association notes that the knowledge on sexual health has declined from nine to eight points out of the full score of twelve (75% and 66.7% respectively) among students in Forms 3 to 6. This figure is at a ten-year low since 2006. The results were even more alarming among Forms 1 and 2 students who had scored just five points out of twelve (41.7%).²
5. A study jointly conducted by The Tung Wah Group of Hospitals and the Hong Kong Polytechnic University in 2009 among Forms 2 to 4 students found that less than four percent of the respondents felt they had received adequate sex education in schools while nearly eighty percent said they had at some point tried to obtain sexual knowledge from pornographic websites.³
6. These studies paint a grim picture as to how and where school children are receiving sex education, and its quality. To make matters worse, the sex education guidelines recommended by the education department are outdated and voluntary. It has been reported that the guideline has not been updated for over two decades and it is up to individual schools how such a topic should be explored, if at all.
7. Drawing reference from the UK, sex education is contained in a statutory guideline where it requires information on sex and relationships provided is of high quality. The UNESCO recently published an updated *International technical guidance on sexuality education* indicated that evidence-based sexuality education programs have contributed to, among other things, delayed initiation of sexual intercourse, reduction in risk-taking and increased use of condoms and contraception.

¹ Advisory Council on AIDS, [Recommended HIV/AIDS Strategies for Hong Kong \(2017-2021\)](#), Para 11.

² Family Planning Association of Hong Kong, [Report on Youth Sexuality Study 2016](#).

³ Tung Wah Groups of Hospital and Hong Kong Polytechnic University, [青少年瀏覽網上色情資訊的現況及影響研究](#)

8. Hong Kong's health authorities should work closely with the education department in order to formulate sex education curricula that are compulsory, scientific-sound, evidence-based and adopting a human right approach so that young people are able to learn about equipped with the skills to make responsible and well-informed decisions as well as to understand their rights and obligations.

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)

9. In 2014, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) both issued guidelines recommending PrEP be made available for people at substantial risk of HIV infection as part of combination prevention approaches, ie. making available of PrEP, suppressing viral loads in people living with HIV so that the virus is untransmissible, regularly HIV/STI testing, and rapidly putting people who has recently been seroconverted to antiretroviral therapy.
10. Ample studies have seen "dramatic" and "steep" drops in new HIV incidence among gay and bisexual men (GBM) have been observed in major cities such as London⁴, San Francisco⁵ and Sydney where PrEP was made available in large scale and at very low cost.
11. Being put on PrEP entails users to undergo HIV/STI check every three to six months. This provides a good measure to ensure that they are on a tight regiment in case of any HIV/STI infection and those who yield a positive result can then be put on treatment rapidly, thereby reducing the risk of further spreading the infection.
12. Concerns have been raised on possible increase of risk compensation after initializing PrEP among GBM. There are no studies correlating the claims. While the trend of STI incidence has not decreased around the time when PrEP was introduced, it remains relatively consistent.^{6 7}
13. At a conference held in Hong Kong in January 2018, a representative from ACON -- the leading and largest HIV organization responsible for piloting the PrEP program from New South Wales, Australia -- shared that they were able to attract people who were previously unreachable and have never been tested to come out since the introduction of the PrEP program with ethnic minorities representing the increase in the said demographic.
14. Numerous indicators point to the promising result brought by a combination prevention approach. It is for this reason that we urge the Government of Hong Kong introduce similar programs in Hong Kong so that PrEP is made available in a low cost quickly to priority communities.
15. I hope you find this paper useful and I stand ready to provide further inputs should any member wish to have more information on the issues.

Sincerely,



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cc. Dr. Chui Tak-yi, JP, Under Secretary for Food and Health, Food and Health Bureau (usfhoffice@fhb.gov.hk)
Dr. Wong Ka-hing, JP, Controller, Centre for Health Protection (cchp@dh.gov.hk)
Mr. Joe Ng Ka-shing, Principal Edu Officer (Curriculum Development) 1, Education Bureau (joeksng@edb.gov.hk)

⁴ <https://www.poz.com/article/hiv-diagnoses-plummet-uks-largest-sexual-health-clinic>

⁵ San Francisco Department of Public Health, [HIV Epidemiology Annual Report 2016](#)

⁶ Dr. Albert Liu et al., [Preexposure Prophylaxis for HIV Infection Integrated With Municipal- and Community-Based Sexual Health Services](#).

⁷ Aidsmap, [PROUD PrEP study results published](#).