



衛生防護中心  
Centre for Health Protection

## Risk Communication Advisory Group (RCAG)

# Promoting Health in Hong Kong: A Strategy for Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases

## Purpose

This paper aims to update Members on the strategy for prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (NCD) in Hong Kong.

## Background

2. Globally and locally, we are seeing an increasing number of people suffering from NCD which caused ill-health, disability and premature deaths. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that approximately two-thirds of total deaths were caused by NCD. Recognising that prevention of NCD would be an important priority in healthcare development, the WHO publicised the *Global Strategy for the Prevention and Control of NCD* in 2000 and called on the health authorities of its Member States to establish their own national policy frameworks for prevention and control of NCD. In this regard, countries like Australia, Singapore, United Kingdom, Canada, the United States and Sweden have developed their own national NCD prevention and control policies.

## NCD and prevalence of risk factors in Hong Kong

3. In 2007, five major NCD, namely cancer, heart diseases, stroke, chronic lower respiratory diseases and diabetes, accounted for over 60% of all registered deaths in Hong Kong. About 60% of in-patient discharges and deaths were also ascribed to NCD. On the other hand, injuries and poisoning is an important cause of death amongst the



younger age groups: it was second in children aged 5-14; and fifth in children aged 1-4. Majority of NCD like circulatory system disease, endocrine and metabolic disease, and musculoskeletal disease, also require long term follow-up by doctors.

4. Many NCD are closely related to our living habits including unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, excessive drinking and smoking. Local surveys have found that such unhealthy lifestyles are common among the Hong Kong population:

- (a) over 81% of people aged 18-64 failed to meet the recommended intake of having a minimum of five servings of fruit and vegetables per day (Behavioural Risk Factor Survey 2007);
- (b) over 18% of people aged 18-64 were classified as having “low” level of physical activity; 44.4% had less than one day of leisure time exercise per week (Behavioural Risk Factor Survey 2007);
- (c) about one in seven (14.0%) of people aged 15 and above were daily smokers (Thematic Household Survey No.26. Census and Statistic Department);
- (d) about 9% of people aged 18-64 had binge drinking (i.e. drink at least 5 glasses or cans of alcoholic drinks on one occasion) (Behavioural Risk Factor Survey 2007); and
- (e) 14.5% of youth aged 15-17 drank alcohol occasionally or regularly (Population Health Survey 2003/04).

5. The presence of the above behavioural risk factors can lead to the development of biomedical risk factors, notably excessive body weight, high blood pressure, adverse blood sugar and lipid levels that are the key risk factors for most NCD. For instance, over 38% of people aged 15 and above were overweight; about 7% and 27% of this age group had diabetes and high blood pressure respectively; and over 33% had suboptimal cholesterol.

### **NCD Prevention and Control Strategy in Hong Kong**

6. With an expanding and ageing population, the burden of NCD is expected to rise in the decades ahead. Recognising that there will be significant health, social and economic impacts on our population if the problem of NCD is left uncontrolled, the Department of Health (DH) has developed a strategic framework on prevention and control of NCD in Hong Kong. The strategic framework was drawn up based on

discussions and inputs from experts of various disciplines, and has taken into account the WHO's guiding principles in disease prevention and health promotion as well as public health concepts and approaches of other places.

7. The framework document entitled "Promoting Health in Hong Kong: A Strategic Framework for Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases" was launched on 28 October 2008. The document provides an account of overarching principles for the prevention and control of NCD. It also sets out the vision, goal and strategic directions to help shape an environment that is conducive to sustaining Hong Kong people's health and well-being.

8. To achieve the overall goal of increasing the positive health and quality of life of people in Hong Kong, six strategic directions have been identified for focusing the attention, resources and actions at areas in where investments in NCD prevention and control can bring the greatest return in terms of health outcomes. These include:

- (a) supporting new and strengthening existing health promotion and NCD prevention initiatives or activities that are in line with this strategy. Examples include fostering implementation of territory-wide health promotion programmes such as "healthy eating", "active living" and "tackling overweight"; and mobilising resources and providing support for key non-government organisations in health promotion and NCD prevention;
- (b) generating an effective information base and system to guide action across the disease pathway;
- (c) strengthening partnership and fostering engagement of all relevant stakeholders;
- (d) building the capacity and capability to combat NCD. Key actions include ensuring all healthcare workers will receive training on the principles of NCD prevention, with capacity to prevent, detect and treat them; and using research and evaluation to drive evidence-based practice;
- (e) ensuring a health sector that is responsive to the NCD

challenges and to improve the system of care. Key actions include strengthening the role of health promotion and disease prevention in the healthcare system; and

- (f) strengthening and developing supportive health promoting legislation such as providing legislative commitment to protect the health of the public in areas that relate to specific public health issues including tobacco control policy, and food labelling and safety.

## **Implementation of the Strategy**

9. To steer and take the strategy forward, a strategic management structure is required to oversee the development and overall progress of the implementation plan. A high-level Steering Committee (SC) comprising representatives from the Government, public and private sectors, academia, professional bodies, industry and other local key partners has been established. The SC, chaired by the Secretary for Food and Health, will deliberate on and oversee the overall roadmap and strategy, including the setting up of Working Groups (WGs) to advise on specific priority areas. The first SC meeting was held on 28 October 2008.

10. Under the steering of the SC, a number of WGs will be set up to draw up action plans and recommendation. The WGs will comprise experts from public and private sectors including healthcare professionals, academia, social services sector, relevant industries and government departments, etc.

11. To tackle the imminent problems caused by the leading risk factors of overweight/obesity, unhealthy diet and physical inactivity, a WG on Diet and Physical Activity (WGDPA) will be established in late 2008 as a first step. The WGDPA will focus on promoting healthy diet and physical activities for the local population, draw up action plans on promoting activities such as EatSmart@school.hk Campaign and EatSmart@restaurant.hk Campaign; and enhancing collaboration with schools, pediatricians, NGOs, District Councils in health promotion programmes, etc. The WG will aim at submitting its recommendations and work plan to the SC for consideration in 2009.

12. Another WG on Injuries and Alcohol Misuse (WGIAM) will be

established in 2009 to focus on prevention and control of unintentional injuries and excessive drinking. WGs on other priority areas will be established thereafter subject to the deliberations of the SC.

13. The development of a comprehensive strategy for prevention and control of NCD is a significant move in strengthening Hong Kong's work in reducing the impact of NCD and improving the overall population health. The framework documents have also been uploaded onto the website of the DH and Centre for Health Protection for public access.

**Advice Sought**

14. Members are invited to note the strategy on prevention and control of NCD. Comments are welcomed.

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