

## SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED HEPATITIS C INFECTION AMONG HIV POSITIVE MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN IN HONG KONG

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**Background:** Epidemics of sexually transmitted Hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection in men who have sex with men (MSM), majority being HIV infected, is well documented in western and Asian countries in recent years. This study aimed to look into the local epidemiology of incident HCV infection among HIV positive MSM.

**Description:** In the largest local HIV clinic at Integrated Treatment Centre (ITC) under Department of Health, serological screening of HCV antibody for all new HIV-infected patients was introduced in 2002. Since 2007, annual testing for all MSM patients was further implemented.

**Lessons learned:** The overall prevalence of anti-HCV among HIV-infected patients in ITC in 2012 was 13.1%. Among all infection risk, those infected with HIV via injecting drug use were of the highest rate (98.7%), whereas the prevalence of anti-HCV among HIV-infected MSM was 1.3%. From 2002 to December 2012, eight cases of incident HCV infection (by anti-HCV seroconversion) were detected in ITC.

From May 2013 to March 2014, 17 cases of incident HCV infection were detected (table). All cases were MSM, aged from 20 to 53 years old (median: 42 years). All except two cases were Chinese. Majority (88%) were suspected to have acquired the HIV infection locally, and were on antiretroviral therapy at the time of HCV diagnoses. Among 13 cases with available HCV genotype results, 12 (92.3%) cases belonged to genotype 3. Eight cases (47%) were found to be coinfecting with syphilis. The diagnoses of syphilis, detected from regular serological screening, were all made within two months of HCV diagnoses, which suggested that the two infections might be acquired at the same time.

Epidemiological investigation showed that none of the cases had history of injecting drug use. Thirteen (76.5%) cases reported unprotected anal and/or oral sex, and 3 (17.6%) cases reported use of recreational drugs. There was however no apparent linkage on their sexual exposure.

**Conclusions:** The incidence of sexually transmitted HCV among HIV positive MSM has been increasing in Hong Kong. Enhanced efforts to reduce risky behaviours for sexual transmission of the infection is warranted, probably through targeted measures for MSM at higher risk.

Case	Gender	Age	Year of first HIV positivity	Ethnicity	Risk of HIV transmission	Antiretroviral therapy	HIV viral load /CD4 at the time of HCV diagnosis	Recent Syphilis infection	Time of HCV diagnosis
1.	M	53	2010	Chinese	Homosexual	Yes	<75/475	Yes	May 13
2.	M	46	2012	Chinese	Homosexual	Yes	<75/363	No	Jul 13
3.	M	44	2001	Chinese	Homosexual /bisexual	Yes	<75/532	Yes	Aug 13
4.	M	28	2009	Chinese	Homosexual	Yes	<75/435	Yes	Aug 13
5.	M	20	2012	Chinese	Homosexual	Yes	<75/410	Yes	Sep 13
6.	M	40	2010	Chinese	Homosexual	Yes	<75/443	Yes	Aug 13
7.	M	47	2007	Chinese	Homosexual /bisexual	Yes	<75/239	No	Nov 13
8.	M	42	2006	Chinese	Homosexual	Yes	<75/459	Yes	Aug 13
9.	M	49	2010	Chinese	Homosexual	Yes	<75/499	No	Dec 13
10.	M	37	2012	Chinese	Homosexual	Yes	<75/297	No	Dec 13
11.	M	29	2009	Filipino	Homosexual	Yes	<75/314	No	Jan 14
12.	M	36	2013	Chinese	Homosexual	Yes	<75/688	Yes	Jan 14
13.	M	47	2012	Caucasian	Homosexual	Yes	<75/1117	No	Dec 13
14.	M	34	2013	Chinese	Homosexual	No	60000/478	No	Jan 14
15.	M	31	2012	Chinese	Homosexual	Yes	<75/395	No	Feb 14
16.	M	32	2013	Chinese	Homosexual	Yes	<75/199	Yes	Feb 14
17.	M	49	2007	Chinese	Homosexual	Yes	<75/658	No	Mar 14