

## Abstract Form

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THE CHANGING NATURE OF THE EPIDEMIC OF HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS (HIV) INFECTION AND ACQUIRED IMMUNODEFICIENCY SYNDROME (AIDS) IN HONG KONG, 2001 – 2006

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**Background:** Hong Kong managed to maintain as a low HIV prevalence area in the past two decades. However, there has been a substantial increase in HIV reports in recent years.

**Methods:** To better understand the epidemiology of HIV/AIDS in Hong Kong, we analysed data from the Voluntary HIV Reporting System of the Department of Health from 2001-2006 to examine trends in various transmission routes.

**Results:** During 2001-2006, we received 1656 HIV reports and 355 AIDS reports, which constituted 51.8% and 41.5% of all reported HIV and AIDS cases respectively. The male-to-female ratio was 3.7:1. The median age for male and female was 37 years (range:<1–82) and 32 years (range:6-74) respectively. Persons aged 50 years or above constituted 15.2% of the reports. For cases acquired through injection drug use (IDU), 63.8% (90/141) were Asian non-Chinese while for other cases, 70.3% (1065/1515) were Chinese. Comparing 2001-2003 and 2004-2006, we noticed a 35.9% increase in HIV reports from 702 to 954. The changes in proportion of different transmission routes were: heterosexual contacts from 55.1% to 36.1% (p<0.001); men having sex with men (MSM) from 21.4% to 29.2% (p<0.001), IDU from 4.6% to 11.4% (p<0.001) and undetermined from 18.5% to 22.4% (p=0.052). The heterosexual:MSM ratio was decreased from 2.6:1 to 1.2:1. In the 6-year period, mother-to-child transmission and blood contact constituted 0.4% (7/1656) and

0.2% (4/1656) of HIV reports respectively. Among cases with sub-typing done, the predominant strain for heterosexuals, MSM and IDU were HIV-1 CRF01\_AE (379/578, 66%), HIV-1 subtype B (276/341, 81%) and HIV-1 CRF01\_AE (93/115, 81%) respectively. The trend of AIDS reports remained stable with an average annual number of 59 cases during 2001-2006. The commonest AIDS-defining illnesses were *Pneumocystis jirovecii* pneumonia (40%) and tuberculosis (30%).

**Conclusions:** Rapid increase in HIV infections among MSM is of considerable concern. We recommended further studies to characterise their risk behaviours, as well as community-appropriate strategies and resource prioritisation to prevent on-going transmission among MSM. The Voluntary Reporting System is useful in tracking the HIV epidemiology. To improve its function, clinicians are encouraged to ascertain the transmission routes in diagnosed HIV infections.

Key words: HIV Infections, Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome, Epidemiology

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