

## Abstract Form

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WHAT DO PEOPLE LIVING WITH HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS (HIV) / ACQUIRED IMMUNODEFICIENCY SYNDROME (AIDS) NEED?

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**Background:** People living with HIV/AIDS (PLHA) benefit from highly active anti-retroviral therapy with marked decrease in morbidity and mortality. Targeting PLHA for HIV prevention is important. We conducted a health needs assessment of PLHA in 2006.

**Methods:** We used the epidemiological and corporate approaches. We identified unaddressed needs, barriers to care and service gaps through: 1) Review of the local epidemiological profile of HIV/AIDS, the projected trend and existing services; 2) An anonymous self-administered questionnaire survey in the two public HIV clinics to collect the views of PLHA on medical care, social services and the perceived acceptance by the society; 3) Four focus group interviews with PLHA and frontline service providers; and 4) Semi-structured in-depth interviews with parents of HIV-infected children.

**Results:** Overall, the healthcare needs are adequately met with good accessibility of medical care. However, about 20% of reported HIV cases were diagnosed late with progression to AIDS within 3 months. Also, the critical mass of healthcare professionals specializing in HIV/AIDS care is small. In view of the increasing survival of PLHA, the risk of shortage poses challenge of sustaining the delivery of quality care in the future. Besides, non-acceptance is still perceived to be widespread in the community, which hinders their integration into society. PLHA suffer from social isolation and have poor self-image. There is a lack of peer support and an enabling environment for them to share with and mutually support one another. They regarded employment as essential. For infected children, some

still did not know their status.

**Output and Recommendations:** The results provided input for the formulation of the “*Recommended HIV/AIDS Strategies for Hong Kong: 2007-2011*”. In view of the growing number of PLHA, we recommended strengthening professional training and career development in HIV medicine. The HIV testing coverage among at-risk populations should be improved to achieve early diagnosis. Efforts in promoting acceptance of PLHA should be increased. Rehabilitative services to empower PLHA need to be augmented. Through developing self-help groups, PLHA could take an active part in prevention and care. Finally, support to parents of affected children in disclosure of HIV status should be coordinated.

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