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Track C - HIV counseling and testing

CDC0533 - Characteristics of clients attending a public anonymous voluntary HIV counselling and testing clinic (1998 to 2006)

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Issues: The Department of Health of Hong Kong has been operating an AIDS Hotline 852-27802211 and a voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) clinic since 1985.

Description: VCT service is arranged for callers through the AIDS Hotline. The HIV testing is anonymous, confidential, free of charge and with pre- and post-test counselling. Understanding the profile of clients attending the VCT clinic can shed light on improving HIV prevention programmes. Data collected from interviews of clients from year 1998 to 2006 were analysed.

Lessons learned: Over the nine-year period, a majority of the clients were male (81.2%), Chinese (90.6%), and aged between 15-49 years (92.8%). The trend of demography was relatively stable over the years with small fluctuation. Heterosexual contact and sex between men were the suspected HIV exposure prompting testing in 81.3% and 12.6% of clients respectively. The demographic and HIV risk characteristics of attendees were comparable to the reported HIV infections in Hong Kong except a lower proportion of non-Chinese and men who have sex with men (MSM). Middle-aged males were the main users of the service. Overall, 175 subjects were tested positive, yielding a prevalence of 1.48%.

Next steps: The VCT service run by the Department of Health can access to people at risk of HIV infection. However, specific communities may require more targeted testing services in order to reach them. Notwithstanding, building the societal climate favourable for HIV testing and strengthening collaboration between the government and NGOs servicing specific populations at higher risk such as MSM could further enhance their use of the VCT service and facilitate early HIV diagnosis and referral for care.

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