



# XVII INTERNATIONAL AIDS CONFERENCE

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## Poster Exhibition

### Track C - Risk factors for acquisition of HIV

#### MOPE0290 - Epidemiologic and behavioural characteristics of a large cluster of HIV-1 subtype B infections among MSM in Hong Kong

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**Background:** Concomitant with the rise in reported MSM (men who have sex with men) HIV infections in Hong Kong, very similar genetic sequence was detected among some HIV-1 subtype B cases first in 2005. Subsequent laboratory testing found more cases fall within the cluster, most being MSM. We conducted a detailed epidemiological investigation of this cluster to look for common risk factors.

**Methods:** From June to September 2007, we carried out in-depth face-to-face interviews with the MSM cluster-cases and other HIV-positive MSM not linked to any clusters (non-cluster cases).

**Results:** We successfully interviewed 33 cluster-cases and 57 non-cluster cases. Most were young- to middle-aged Chinese who had probably acquired HIV locally (94% in cluster-cases versus 79% in non-cluster cases,  $p=0.06$ ). 73% of cluster-cases reported having >50 sex partners in their lifetime, compared with 53% of non-cluster cases ( $p=0.06$ ). Most were non-regular, non-commercial sex partners and use of condom was low and inconsistent. Past histories of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) were more common among cluster-cases (76% versus 44%,  $p=0.004$ ). Many cluster-cases sourced casual sex partners through gay websites (73% versus 47%,  $p=0.02$ ). Besides, cluster-cases were more likely than non-cluster cases to have participated in private group-sex activities or so-called "sex parties" (36% versus 18%,  $p=0.046$ ). Taking recreational drugs such as ecstasy (MDMA) and ketamine with sexual encounters occurred in 36% of cluster cases and 21% of non-cluster cases ( $p=0.12$ ). No epidemiological linkage between the cluster-cases was identified and no single venue was frequented by most cluster-cases.

**Conclusions:** High level of sexual risk behaviours, concurrent STIs, use of internet to seek sex partners, participation in private group sex activities and the associated abuse of psychotropic substances are driving rapid HIV growth in the MSM community. Epidemiological findings suggested that this HIV-1 subtype B strain has become a local strain in Hong Kong. Presenting author email: [kh Wong@dhsp.net](mailto:kh Wong@dhsp.net)