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Track C - Surveillance of HIV and AIDS

CDC0232 - The changing transmission pattern of HIV infection in Hong Kong

K.M. Mak, H.Y. Wong, W.L. Mak, L.M. Ho, K.H. Wong

Special Preventive Programme, Department of Health, Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Background: To sketch the epidemiological picture of HIV infections of the past 23 years in Hong Kong.

Methods: Since 1984, a voluntary case-based clinical and laboratory dual reporting system for HIV surveillance was adopted. Data of the system was examined, especially for route of transmission.

Results: As of December 2006, 3198 HIV cases were reported. Three quarters of the reports were from public healthcare settings each year. Male accounted for 80% of all infections. Since 1987, sexual contact substituted blood/ blood product transfusion as the main route of transmission (>60% every year). Before 1993, men having sex with men (MSM) was the major risk factor and contributed to 50-100% of sexual transmission in male. Then, it dropped to 20-38% and was replaced by heterosexual infection. Starting from 2004, MSM proportion was rising again (58% in 2006, >heterosexual male). Recently, clusters of HIV infection with similar gene sequencing were detected, in which nearly 80% of transmission accounted for homosexual/bisexual contacts, implying a rapid and local spread. In addition, after the launch of universal HIV antibody urine testing in methadone clinics in 2004, the proportion of HIV report among injecting drug users increased from a yearly average of 3% to 11%.

Sporadic cases were reported through perinatal transmission, resulting in 0-2% along the years. HIV infection from contaminated blood products was no longer a threat after implementation of blood products screening since 1985. Only one case was notified in 1997 by means of contaminated blood transfusion.

Conclusions: Sexual transmission is the most important cause of HIV in Hong Kong. The rising MSM infections demands continuous surveillance and intervention activities by fostering community involvement and partnership. Injecting drug users are regarded as higher risk of HIV infection, and universal screening programme has promoted early diagnosis which enhances control of HIV infection among drug users.

Presenting author email: kmmak@dhspp.net