

## **Executive summary**

A community driven comprehensive needs assessment for people living with HIV in Hong Kong (MSS 242 R)

### **Aims and Objectives**

This comprehensive community-driven study aimed to understand various aspects and needs of people living with HIV (PLWH) in Hong Kong. Specific topics included sexual behaviours, substance use, positive and negative influences of social media, social network, disclosure of HIV positive status, aging perspectives, non-communicable diseases, community building, and service needs assessment.

### **Project design**

A cross-sectional survey was conducted and 422 completed questionnaires were collected. Participants were recruited from five local NGOs and two governmental clinics. With verbal informed consent and the fieldworkers signing a form confirming proper consent procedures, the participants chose to 1) self-administer the questionnaire, 2) be interviewed by our fieldworkers on site, or 3) mail it back to us.

### **Target population**

Inclusion criteria included: 1) aged  $\geq 18$  years old, 2) diagnosed as HIV positive, and 3) able to complete the questionnaire in Chinese or English.

### **Main achievements**

- 1) Among 422 participants, 11.4% were female; 66.4% were classified as men who have sex with men (MSM) and 22.3% as non-MSM males.
- 2) The prevalence of significant probable depression (CESD-10 score  $\geq 10$ ) was very high (35.6%), and that of mild, moderate, and severe anxiety was 27.5%, 8.1%, and 5.0%, respectively.
- 3) Since HIV diagnosis, 11.6% had had sex with only HIV positive sex partners (potential sero-sorting). Among all participants, 9.2% had had unprotected sexual intercourse with HIV positive sex partners.
- 4) Among all MSM participants, 21.8% had had UAI with  $\geq 1$  type of male sex partner.
- 5) Among all participants, 21.1% had not disclosed their HIV status to anyone.
- 6) Of all participants, 36.7% had used substances prior to their HIV diagnosis (MSM: 45.7%; non-MSM male: 21.3%; female: 14.6%); 22.0% had used substances since their HIV diagnosis (MSM: 30.0%; non-MSM male: 6.4%; female: 6.3%).

7) Among MSM, 15.7% had participated in Chem-fun since HIV diagnosis; 8.2% in the last three months; 11.1% perceived a moderate to very high chance of participating in Chem-Fun in the next year.

8) Among MSM who had participated in Chem-fun (n=44), 65.9% witnessed group sex; 90.9% had had anal intercourse; 52.3% had had group sex; 68.2% had had UAI in the last episode of Chem-fun.

9) The prevalence of self-reported “at least one NCD” (e.g., hypertension, liver disease, and diabetes) was 36.5%. It was 55.4% for those  $\geq 45$  years of age (22.4% for those  $< 45$ ).

10) Among those with significant depression or mild to severe anxiety, 36.1% to 43.4% had high/very high demand for services provided by psychiatrists or clinical psychologists and emotional/psychological counseling.

### **Conclusions**

High prevalence is found in areas of risk behaviors, mental health problems, and chronic diseases. Substance use, in particular, is an urgent emerging problem. There is high demand for psychological support among those with probable mental health problems. The project is a community effort and several meetings have been held for planning and dissemination. We know little about PLWH in Hong Kong. Strategic and regular data collection and dissemination are greatly warranted. Interdisciplinary approaches are also needed for HIV prevention and care for PLWH in Hong Kong.