

4.26 As health disparities take many different forms and arise from a variety of causes, there is no single solution for rectifying social disparities or narrowing the gaps between population subgroups. Various reports and analyses of health disparity consistently argue that it can be reduced through responsive public policies and collaborative public health actions. These may include building human capital through quality education systems, combating poverty by means of effective welfare programmes and increasing employment opportunities.^{11, 12}

Initiatives in Health Promotion and Disease Prevention

4.27 In Hong Kong, both the public and private sectors conduct health promotion programmes and provide disease preventive services.

4.28 Since 2000, the DH has strengthened health promotive and disease preventive activities in various services (Exhibit 38). On top of that, the Tobacco Control Office has been established to enhance and co-ordinate efforts on tobacco control, and the Men's Health Programme and the CSP have been launched to promote health of men and regular use of cervical smears to prevent cervical cancer in women respectively.

4.29 The HA has also played an active role in health promotion and disease prevention. For example, the Health InfoWorld organises exhibits, workshops and health promotion activities relating to major disease burdens in collaboration with community partners, various professionals, corporations, patient groups and volunteers. Its Patient/Health Resources Centres, based in hospitals, serve as a platform for engaging discharged patients and their carers in health education and self-management programs with the aim of enhancing patient mutual support as well as secondary prevention in relevant disease groups. The General and Specialist Out-patient Clinics also provide health talks to patients and the population at large.

Exhibit 38: Health promotion and disease prevention in the DH

Health Promotion (Central Health Education Unit and Oral Health Education Unit)

- Promotes the health of the community through collaborating with various agencies in health promotion, researching and evaluating the effectiveness of promotion programmes, disseminating information on good promotive practices, providing training to people engaged in health promotion activities and mobilising the community to involve in all aspects of health promotion through various channels of mass media and promotion campaigns.

Family Health Service (Maternal & Child Health Centres and Woman Health Centres)

- Child health: provides a comprehensive range of health promotion and disease prevention services for young children 0 to 5 years, including parenting programme, immunisation programme, and health and developmental surveillance programme.
- Maternal health and Family Planning: provides antenatal and postnatal care, cervical screening and family planning services for women.
- Woman health: provides health education, counselling and screening services to women aged 64 and below.

Health Service for Students (Student Health Service Centres, Special Assessment Centres, outreaching teams for adolescent health and School Dental Clinics)

- Provides all primary and secondary school students with health assessment, health education and individual health counselling services.
- Promotes psychosocial health of adolescents in secondary schools through an outreaching Adolescent Health Programme.
- Helps primary school children develop good self-care behaviour in dental health. Services offered by the School Dental Clinics include dental health assessment and check-ups; oral healthcare counselling and oral hygiene instructions; and preventive, basic curative and emergency treatment.
- Provide free vaccination through school immunisation teams.

Elderly Health Service (Elderly Health Care Centres and Visiting Health Teams)

- Provides integrated health services, including health assessment, physical check-ups, counselling, curative treatment and health education to elderly people aged 65 and above.
- Reaches into the community and residential settings to improve the self-care abilities of the elderly.
- Provides training to persons responsible for caring for the elderly in the community and residential settings.

Specialist Outpatient Service (Tuberculosis & Chest Clinics and Social Hygiene Clinics)

- Provides health education to the population at large and free curative care for patients suffering from tuberculosis, other respiratory diseases and sexually transmitted diseases.

4.30 A report showed that about 70% of the out-patient consultations are provided by the private sector.¹³ Another survey revealed that more than one-tenth of Hong Kong population aged 15 and above had received treatment from Chinese medicine practitioners in the 30 days before enumeration.¹ Therefore, their role in health promotion and disease prevention cannot be underscored.

4.31 NGOs, act as advocates for health, are an important partner in health promotion and disease prevention. For example, the Hong Kong Council on Smoking & Health coordinates measures against tobacco use, informs the public on the harm of smoking and its adverse health effects as well as conducts research into the cause, prevention and cure of dependence. The Hong Kong Cancer Fund is dedicated to the prevention of cancer through proper diets and healthy lifestyles. The Family Planning Association of Hong Kong runs health promotion campaigns and provides various counselling and clinical services to adolescents and adults. The Hong Kong Childhood Injury Prevention and Research Association conducts evaluation research as to inform and bring about good clinical practices.