

Disease Prevention in the Elders*Lee RSY**Elderly Health Service, Department of Health, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region*

Hong Kong is undergoing a demographic transformation with a significant increase in both the number and proportion of older people in the population. With an advancing age, the impact of non-genetic factors such as lifestyles increases. Many of these risk factors are potentially modifiable, either by individuals or change in their immediate environments. Therefore, preventive care especially health promotion is of paramount importance towards active ageing.

Older adults often have a wide range of healthcare needs which bring challenges to healthcare workers to develop integrated services. Family physicians, being the first point-of-contact, are in a prime position in preventive care for the elders. This includes health promotion, risk assessment, disease detection, follow-up care after medical conditions of patients are stabilised and after discharge from hospital. We are also coordinators to advise and direct patients for necessary and appropriate multidisciplinary and specialist healthcare services.

The Elderly Health Centres of the Department of Health aim to address multiple health needs of elderly by providing integrated primary healthcare services to them. Preventive, promotive and curative services are provided from a family medicine perspective using a multidisciplinary team approach. Elders aged 65 or above are eligible for enrolling as members of Elderly Health Centres. Enrolled members are provided with services of health assessment, counselling, health education and curative treatment. The Hong Kong Reference Framework for Preventive Care for Older Adults in Primary Care Settings published by the Primary Care Office of Department of Health also provides updated evidence-based recommendations with a view to enhancing the health of older adults. It provides a common reference to healthcare professionals in Hong Kong for continuing and comprehensive care for elders in the community.