

Dr. PY LAM

Director of Health, Hong Kong



Dr. Lam is the Director of the Department of Health in Hong Kong, China. He has a wide range of experience in public health, including narcotics administration, food safety, disease control and health regulation. On various occasions, Dr. Lam has served as temporary advisor to the World Health Organization (WHO) on policy and strategy of development of traditional medicine and control of non-communicable diseases. He served as Chairman to the 2009 / 2010 session of the Regional Committee Meeting of the Western Pacific Region of WHO. His current priorities include non-communicable disease control, health promotion, tobacco control and regulation of traditional Chinese medicine and pharmaceuticals.

During his tenure, he has, amongst other achievements, brought up-to-date the Methadone Treatment Programme, introduced various measures to control the improper supply of psychotropic medicine, launched a tobacco cessation programme, established a Tobacco Control Office and developed a framework strategy for non-communicable disease control in Hong Kong. He also established a network of various tobacco cessation services and pioneered the wide-scale use of acupuncture in treatment of nicotine dependence. He is one of the key persons responsible for designing the infrastructure for regulation of traditional Chinese medicine in Hong Kong.

健康促進在香港 Health Promotion – Hong Kong's Perspective

Hong Kong has been attaining excellent health indices like low infant and maternal mortality rates as well as long life expectancy at birth. However, similar to other developed areas, the burden of non-communicable disease (NCD) is becoming a great challenge. Unhealthy lifestyle brought about by the effect of globalization has worsened the situation. An approach with concerted effort and whole-of-society commitment is needed to combat the problem.

Through engagement of experts from different fields and sectors, a strategic framework document titled “*Promoting Health in Hong Kong: Strategic Framework for Prevention and Control of NCD*” was developed. This strategy was launched in 2008 to provide a shared vision, direction and goals for NCD prevention. Health promotion actions are underpinned by six core elements, namely partnership, environment, outcome-focused, population-based, life-course, and empowerment (PEOPLE as the acronym).

Whatever health issue that needs to be addressed, it takes more than health education alone to make people adopt healthier lifestyles. It requires a process that enables people to increase control over health determinants to improve their health. It is all about making healthy choices the easier choices.

Twenty five years ago, the Ottawa Charter set out the overarching principles for engaging policy makers, health systems, community, stakeholders and individuals in promoting population health. Today, the same principles apply. It remains the government’s role to generate an effective information base and system to guide preventive actions, support new and strengthen existing programmes, and resort to health promoting legislations where they are most effective. We have to build capacity and foster partnerships. Government should ensure a health sector that is responsive to the NCD challenges and improve the system of care.