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Drug-Related Death Cases in Hong Kong

Commissioned by Action Committee Against Narcotics (ACAN)

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Narcotics Division
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Summary of Major Findings

In this project, we have reviewed hospitalised cases of poisoning (whether drug abuse or parasuicidal attempt) and drug abuse related medical illnesses, Coroner cases (whether drug abuse related death or suicide) and the data-base of the Forensic Toxicology Section of the Government Laboratory. Our data provide a picture of the drug-related deaths during the period 1994-1998 (Section 1 to Section 5) and a quantitative basis for reference regarding the formulation of education and publicity programmes to increase the awareness of the community to the dangers of drug abuse. Based on our experience from this project and the potential sources of data, a feasible way to monitor the problem of drug abuse and drug abuse related deaths in Hong Kong is given in Section 6.

A. Medical Admissions to the Prince of Wales Hospital, 1995-1998

A.1 Acute Poisonings due to Drug Abuse

A.1.1 Between 1995 and 1996-1997, there was a dramatic increase (162-192%) in the number of admissions (from 26 to 68-72) per year. In 1998, the number of admissions decreased to 31, but this was still higher than the 1995 level.

A.1.2 The incidence of poisoning due to drug abuse adjusted for the changing size of the catchment population of the Prince of Wales Hospital was also calculated. Between 1995 and 1996-1997, the increasing incidence of poisoning was even more obvious (from 0.26 to 0.63-1.24 per 100,000, a 142-377% increase). In 1998, the incidence of poisoning decreased to 0.49 per 100,000, but this was still 88% higher than the 1995 level.