

Burden of lung diseases in Hong Kong

Professor Moira CHAN-YEUNG, Department of Medicine, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong
(on behalf of the Burden of Lung Diseases Study Group, Hong Kong Thoracic Society)



Professor Moira CHAN-YEUNG

The burden of lung diseases in Hong Kong is not known. The year 2006 was the 10th and 20th anniversary of the Hong Kong Lung Foundation (HKLF) and the Hong Kong Thoracic Society (HKTS) respectively. To mark the occasion, members of the HKTS, sponsored by the HKLF, carried out the burden of lung diseases study locally to provide comprehensive information from available data on the incidence, consequence and trend of respiratory diseases with the following aims: 1) to increase the awareness of respiratory disease locally; 2) for authorities to make informed policy; 3) to provide a baseline respiratory health status for future comparison. This is a report of the mortality and hospitalization rates of respiratory diseases in Hong Kong in 2005, their trend in the past decade and the incidence or prevalence of selected respiratory diseases and their major risk factors.

Mortality data were obtained from the Department of Health and hospitalization data from the Hospital Authority, Hong Kong. Incidence/prevalence data were obtained from local registries or local studies. Global data were obtained from the World Health Report and UK data from the British Thoracic Society. Trends of mortality and hospitalization rates of various respiratory diseases from 1997 and 2005 were calculated after age standardization and tested for significance using negative binomial regression analysis. Age standardized mortality rates in Hong Kong were compared with those of the United Kingdom (UK) and globally.

We found that respiratory diseases were the most common cause of mortality and hospitalization in Hong Kong in 2005. Globally and in the United Kingdom, cardiovascular disease ranked first as a cause for mortality. In Hong Kong, among respiratory diseases, respiratory infections ranked first in mortality, followed by respiratory tract cancer and chronic obstructive lung disease (COPD). Globally, respiratory infection ranked first followed by COPD as a cause of respiratory mortality while in the UK, respiratory tract cancers ranked first followed by respiratory infection as a cause of respiratory mortality. In Hong Kong, respiratory infections also ranked first followed by COPD as a cause of utilization of respiratory inpatient bed-days. While mortality rates from all respiratory diseases decreased in the past decade, hospitalization rates remained unchanged. Unlike other respiratory diseases, mortality from respiratory infection increased since 2001. Smoking is the most important risk factor in non-communicable respiratory diseases.

We conclude that respiratory diseases are responsible for the highest health-care burden locally. Increased efforts in improving management and prevention of these diseases including tobacco control, improving air quality and vaccination against influenza are necessary.