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CUHK Estimates Local Smokers Spend over HKD1 Million on Tobacco in Life

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27 May 2015

Smoking can cause a number of fatal conditions, such as cardiovascular and respiratory diseases. It also imposes a huge economic burden on society, the healthcare system and smokers themselves. The Faculty of Medicine of The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) estimates that each local smoker consuming one pack of cigarettes per day will spend over HK\$1 million on tobacco products in his or her lifetime, and smoking will incur an annual public expense of over HK\$11.3 billion in Hong Kong. As World No Tobacco Day (31 May) is coming, CUHK would like to share with the public the latest research statistics to encourage smokers to quit.

Dr. Vivian Lee, Associate Professor of the School of Pharmacy, CUHK Faculty of Medicine cum Chairperson of the International Society for Pharmacoeconomics And Outcomes Research - Hong Kong Chapter (ISPOR-HK) says, 'About 1,000 Hong Kong citizens aged 18 or above were asked to respond to a survey conducted by the School of Pharmacy, CUHK. Over 90% of them knew smoking is hazardous to health and its adverse effects. Nevertheless, a majority of smokers keep on smoking. To encourage smokers to quit, we conducted a study recently on the estimated cost of smoking, including the annual economic loss in Hong Kong caused by smoking. We hope to provide a reference for the government to enforce tobacco control, and enhance anti-smoking policies.'

In collaboration with ISPOR-HK, the CUHK School of Pharmacy investigated the tobacco cost per person throughout his or her lifespan in seven different places in the Asia-Pacific region (Hong Kong, Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, and Australia). The average life expectancy and the inflation rate in each place were taken into consideration to calculate the cost of smoking, with an assumption that the smoker starts smoking at the age of 18, and he or she smokes one pack of tobacco cigarettes every day. It is estimated that each smoker in Hong Kong spends an average of HK\$20,440 a year on tobacco products, ranking the third highest among the seven places covered by the



As World No Tobacco Day (31 May) is coming, Dr. Vivian LEE (2nd right), Associate Professor of the School of Pharmacy, CUHK Faculty of Medicine cum Chairperson of the International Society for Pharmacoeconomics And Outcomes Research - Hong Kong Chapter announces the latest study on the cost of smoking to encourage smokers to quit for better health and more wealth. Ms. Yim Ching LEUNG (2nd left), Chairperson of Care For Your Heart, a peer-support-group for heart disease patients, shares the hazardous effects of smoking to health.

study, after Australia and Singapore. The annual economic loss caused by smoking in Hong Kong is also estimated to be over HK\$11.3 billion a year.

Making reference to Standards & Poor's 500 Index, if the smoker who smokes from 18 till 59 years of age uses the money to make investments instead of buying tobacco products, he or she may have a return of nearly HK\$4.71 million (if they smoke 1 pack daily), and up to \$14.1 million (if they smoke 3 packs daily) on retirement at 60 years old, which are equivalent to the current prices of a 400-square-foot-flat in the New Territories and a 800-square-foot-flat on Hong Kong Island respectively.

'By releasing these figures, we hope smokers can understand quitting smoking enables them to have better health and better wealth, as the money spent on cigarettes can be used on investment instead to potentially increase their assets. In addition, the reduction of the smoking population can significantly alleviate the disease burden and reduce public health expenditure.' **Dr. Lee** concludes.