

Preface

In many parts of the world, drinking alcohol beverages is a common behaviour which carries different socio-cultural implications. Nevertheless, the World Health Organization (WHO) has identified alcohol use as the third leading risk factor for global burden of disease, causing an estimated 2.5 million deaths worldwide each year. As such, reducing alcohol-related harm has been accorded as one of the priority areas for action in the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases.

Along with rapid urbanisation and economic growth, drinking alcohol is gaining popularity in Hong Kong. Local surveys have reflected a rising trend of alcohol consumption among the adult population, in particular among women and the younger age group, in recent years. As a result, the disease burden attributed by alcohol use is expected to increase. Apart from physical and mental diseases, social consequences such as work-related problems, domestic violence, financial problems and interpersonal violence will increase and pose significant costs to our society.

To prevent this from happening, we must work in a coordinated manner with an ultimate goal to reduce alcohol-related harm in Hong Kong from all sides and at all levels: the individual, family, organisation and the community, and actively respond to the call made in the Government's strategic framework document *"Promoting Health in Hong Kong: A Strategic Framework for Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases"* published in 2008.



As Chairman of the Working Group on Alcohol and Health, I would like to thank all who helped in drawing up this Action Plan. It is built on detailed examination of the local situation on alcohol use, while drawing references from overseas evidence as well as recommendations of the WHO. Its purpose is to outline the framework of actions that will take place in the coming years to support, and help to set the directions for, effective prevention and control of alcohol-related harm in Hong Kong.

This document marks an important step forward to reduce alcohol-related harm in Hong Kong. It is a product of concerted efforts and wisdom among stakeholders from different sectors of our society. Every individual and organisation has a role to play. With dedication, partnership, and coordinated effort in working towards the objectives of this Action Plan, I am confident that we would be better placed to empower individuals to take responsibility for their own health as well as the health of others, and to create a healthier, safer and more pleasant community, in which we live, learn, work, play and love.

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