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CUHK's Nasopharyngeal Cancer Screening Programme at PWH

Cancer is Hong Kong's greatest killer. Doctors at The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) and Prince of Wales Hospital (PWH) have embarked upon a Nasopharyngeal Cancer Screening Programme to screen patients in the population that are at high risk for this cancer, such as close relatives of patients with the disease.

This screening program forms part of a coordinated broad based effort by a specially formed Workgroup on Nasopharyngeal Cancer at PWH. The aims of this Workgroup are to implement a public education programme and update the medical profession on the best techniques to screen and diagnose high risk patients in a drive towards early detection of the disease. The Programme consists of performing two or more blood tests for the cancer as well as neck and nose examinations. Individual subjects enrolled will be taken care of by a nurse and on average a comprehensive examination will be done every six months.

According to the most recent available figures Nasopharyngeal Cancer is the second most common cancer in Hong Kong. Hong Kong has the world's highest incidence of this cancer, with 1,200 new cases diagnosed each year.

This cancer may cause minimal symptoms in the early stages, thus most cases present the disease at an advanced stage. It is important to try to detect this disease at the earliest possible opportunity.

The excellent treatment methods developed in Hong Kong over the years now achieve cure rates of over 90% in the early stages. Early detection will result in more lives being saved and less suffering for patients. The by-product is saving for the Government and the general medical bill.

Nasopharyngeal Cancer is not infectious but there is a familial tendency to develop the cancer in some families. During its experimentation in the last two years, the programme has successfully identified and treated a few of early cases with the co-operation between various departments, such as Microbiology and Clinical Oncology Departments. With a fund recently granted by the University and Polytechnics Grants Committee (UPGC), the Workgroup will carry out the programme in a larger scale and hopes that the programme will soon expand across the public and private sectors and will change the present pattern of late presentation of this deadly cancer.

The Workgroup would urge those who have a family history of nasopharyngeal cancer to contact the doctor as soon as possible. Or if you have any queries or need further information, please contact Nurse Chiu at telephone 6362121 (9 am to 5 pm on week days.)

(For press enquiries, please contact Dr Tsao at telephone 6362177).