

「青少年濫藥—禁毒教育與推廣策略」研究  
Tackling Drug Abuse by Young People –  
A Study on Preventive Education and Publicity Strategies

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# **Tackling Drug Abuse by Young People – A Study on Preventive Education and Publicity Strategies**

## **Summary Report**

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In the first three quarters of 2007, figures worryingly showed that the number of young drug abusers under the age of 21 had increased by over 10 per cent (13%), compared to the same period in 2006. This was a serious issue for the Government and local community as a whole. To ensure a proactive approach to the problem, a High Level Task Force led by the Secretary for Justice was appointed.

To stop young people from taking drugs, to equip them with sufficient knowledge about drugs and to build up a positive life style, preventive education and publicity is a very important strategy in combating drug abuse. A series of preventive educational programmes have currently been formulated and promoted by the Narcotics Division with the assistance of the Hospital Authority, the Education Bureau, the Social Welfare Department and other non-governmental organizations.

This study will examine the effectiveness of such strategies in tackling the issue of drug abuse amongst young people. Do the current preventive educational programmes work effectively? Do they deter young people from taking drugs? Is there room for improvement?

In this study, “young people” refers to those aged between 10 and 24. According to the Narcotics Division, “drug abuse” refers to the taking of drugs without following medical advice or prescriptions, or the indiscreet use of dangerous drugs for non-treatment purposes. As for “preventive educational and publicity strategies”, Hong Kong’s drug preventive educational and publicity measures are designed to: (1) keep the public aware of, and to warn them about drug abuse; (2) prevent drug abuse among young people; and (3) promote Hong Kong’s anti-drug efforts. The focus of this study is with regard to subject (2).

In order to review the current strategies of educational and preventive measures and to identify possible problems, this study will be conducted through (1) a territory wide survey of Hong Kong young people aged between 10 and 24; (2) focussed group interviews with young people and parents; and (3) through interviews with academics and specialists. It is hoped that this study will provide a better

understanding of the issue and will result in recommendations which could be suggested to the authorities concerned.

The telephone survey was conducted between the 26th of February and the 7th of March, 2008, from 6.15pm to 10.15pm. By random sampling, 532 eligible young people aged between 10 and 24 were successfully polled, yielding a response rate of 76%, with a standard error within  $\pm 2.2\%$ .

In order to have a deeper understanding of how the young people of Hong Kong and parents get access to anti-drug messages, 11 focus group interviews with young people and 3 focus group interviews with parents were also conducted with a total of 79 youth and 24 parents.

Interviews with experts and academics were conducted in the period between the 20th of February and the 12th of March, 2008. 11 persons were interviewed, among them academics, school principals, the chairman of the Action Committee Against Narcotics Sub-committee on Preventive Education and Publicity, social workers and the chairman of the Federation of the Parent-Teacher Association of Hong Kong Eastern District. Their observations and opinions regarding the current strategies of educational and preventive measures were sought.

This chapter summarized the major findings and analyses of the survey, related discussions and recommendations for reference.

## Discussion

### **1. Preventive Education and Publicity Strategies are a long-term investment in which resource input is of paramount importance for an effective campaign.**

According to the telephone survey, 41.5% of correspondents rated the effectiveness of the current anti-drug educational and promotional campaign as “average”. 17.4% of them regarded preventive education as something unrelated to them – these suggest there is room for improvement for the current anti-drug educational and promotional campaigns.

From the focussed group discussions with students, clients of outreach services, young drug abusers and parents, it showed that they understood the importance of anti-drug educational and promotional ventures and the adoption of a consistent and holistic approach. There was a positive response to it.

During interviews with experts, a scholar pointed out that the government had only allocated 3% of its annual budget to anti-drug educational and promotional campaigns in the past few years. He regarded preventive education as the cure for the problem of drug abuse among young people. To make anti-drug education effective, the input of resources was of paramount importance.

The HKSAR government currently employs five main strategies to target drug abuse – law enforcement, preventive education, research, international co-operation and treatment and rehabilitation services. For the year 2006 / 07, approximately 0.59 billion dollars was spent in implementing the above strategies. 18.5 million dollars (approximately 3.1% of the total budget) was spent for the purpose of preventive educational and promotional programmes – a percentage similar to that of the past three years (3.2% for the year 2003 / 04, 3.1% for the year 2004 / 05, 3.0% for the year 2005 / 06).

To promote community efforts to beat drugs, the government established a Beat Drugs Fund to provide financial support to those drug projects which met the funding criteria set down by the Fund. This is a once-only application and the funding for each single project will not usually exceed three million dollars, and the funding period will not normally exceed two years. As the funding for each project is not renewable, the progress of some projects, though effective, may be affected.

Anti-drug education and its promotion is a long-term investment. The effectiveness of any measures preventing youth drug abuse hinges on the input of resources. The government has an important role to play in maintaining the level of resources for the continued success of promoting anti-drug education.

**2. The existing data collection systems cannot effectively monitor the current trend of youth drug abuse – and it hinders the implementation of anti-drug educational and promotional programmes.**

To monitor the trend of youth drug abuse and formulate anti drug-abuse policies, the HKSAR government has been collecting and publishing two sets of data

regarding the number of adolescent drug abusers and related figures – one from the Central Registry of Drug Abuse (CRDA) which collates information regularly on drug abuse cases, and the other from the survey of drug use among students every four years.

CRDA collates information regularly on drug abuse cases reported by law enforcement departments, treatment and welfare agencies, hospitals and clinics, and tertiary institutions. All information is obtained from the clients on a voluntary basis, so it does not cover all the existing drug abusers and thus does not represent an accurate picture. As for the survey on students abusing drugs, a rapidly changing society and the increasingly complex nature of such a study, render a once-every-four-year survey inadequate in following the trend of youth drug abuse.

Some scholars interviewed suggested broadening the spectrum of questions for the survey to cover basic information regarding youth medication and drug use (e.g. age, sex, medications or drugs involved), as well as those regarding risky health-related behaviours so as to understand the latest trend of youth drug abuse.

A deeper understanding of the latest trends in youth drug abuse is helpful in formulating anti-drug educational and promotional programmes, in order to provide more effective and up-to-date services.

**3. The existing anti-drug educational and promotional strategies are mainly “information-based” without a holistic approach (which emphasizes the importance of healthy lifestyles). Moreover, there is no thorough investigation on the reasons why young people take drugs.**

The existing anti-drug educational and promotional strategies are mainly “information-based” – upon the assumption that once informed of the facts regarding the resulting harm, young people would change their attitude towards drug abuse and avoid attempting drugs. This approach not only over-simplified the behaviour of human beings, but also failed to appreciate the circumstances young people are facing as well as ignored the factor of human-environmental interactions.

During the interviews with experts, a scholar stated that the existing preventive promotional measures were too information-based and only worked for some young people. He also pointed out that the emphasis on preventive education should not

only be about facts and figures regarding drugs, but also seek reasons behind the behaviour of drug abuse for the purpose of formulating specific strategies. According to another social worker interviewed, the stories behind drug abuses vary among individuals. Therefore, the promotion of preventive measures will be more successful if the reasons behind drug abuse among individuals could be thoroughly investigated.

From the feedback of focussed group discussions, a student stated that spoon-feeding of information itself was not enough – the focus should be on the reasons behind drug abuse. “A lot of young drug abusers do know the harm of their behaviour, like compulsive teeth-grinding associated with the use of ecstasy – therefore they chew gum when they use ecstasy.” He said. “From their point of view, taking ecstasy is a group activity for fun and many of them started taking ecstasy due to peer pressure. They did not have a choice, though – as they were the only friends they had. You lose all your friends if you leave them.” This proves the need for understanding the reasons behind the behaviour of drug abuse among young people, before formulating effective strategies to deal with the problem.

The current “information-based” promotional strategy is undoubtedly useful in educating and preventing drug abuse for young people generally. However, preventive education is best dealt with using a holistic approach, e.g. to establish healthy lifestyles and at the same time to understand the reasons behind their drug abuse behaviour, in order to formulate specific strategies.

**4. Anti-drug educational and promotional strategies should focus on families, schools as well as the community. In practice, there are problems and limitations to be resolved.**

**(1) On families: Over 30% of young people interviewed regarded parental influence as the most important means of preventing drug use although over 60% said that their parents had never discussed the issue with them. On the other hand, some parents interviewed stated that most parents did not realize the severity of the problem of drug abuse. This coupled with the lack of knowledge in medications and drugs, resulted in them not being able to discuss the problem with their children properly.**

From the telephone survey, 31.6% of correspondents regarded parental influence as the most important means of preventing drug use although 62.6% said that their parents had never discussed the issue with them. While parents are in the forefront regarding preventive education on drug abuse, there is a gap between the expectations of the children and the actions taken by parents.

From the parents' group discussions, the importance of their role in preventive education was agreed upon – but they also acknowledged their lack of knowledge regarding medications and drugs and thus the difficulty in discussing these issues properly with their children in this regard. Besides, some parents stated that they generally were not aware of the severity of the problem of drug abuse and lacked support, which affected the discussion with their children regarding the problem of drug abuse.

Parents play a pivotal role in preventive education. Good family relationships provide a good basis for preventive education. This study showed that a majority of young people had never discussed drug abuse with their parents, and parents were generally not aware of the severity of the problem coupled with the fact that they lacked sufficient knowledge about medications and drugs. How could parents be supported with guidance and knowledge about medications and drugs? How could communication be encouraged between parents and their children? These questions are of paramount importance in solving issues in the work of anti-drug education.

**(2) On schools: Approximately 40% of young people interviewed regarded seminars and activities for anti-drug education in school as the most effective means of promoting preventive education. There are obstacles facing the schools though, for example, priority problems, lack of information, social stigma and lack of support.**

According to a list of 10 options given to the interviewees, 39.7% regarded seminars and activities for anti-drug education in school as the most effective means of promoting preventive education. During the focussed group discussions, young people stated that seminars and activities on anti-drug education at school enhanced their knowledge about medications and drugs, as well as their awareness of the problem of drug abuse.

However, according to the experts and scholars interviewed, there are obstacles facing schools in promoting anti-drug educational programmes, including (a) preventive anti-drug education is not a priority for schools –priority is given to other topics e.g. civic education and sex education when formulating educational programmes; (b) the problem of youth drug abuse has become increasingly complex, including the rapid development of new medications and drugs, the lack of knowledge among school principals and teachers with regard to medications and drugs – which subsequently affects their confidence in promoting preventive anti-drug educational programmes; (c) the effect on the reputation of the school when being labelled by the public as having serious drug abuse issues – which leads to a lack of interest in promoting preventive education; and (d) schools lacking space and resources which is detrimental to promoting anti-drug education.

The majority of young people interviewed regarded schools as the best place to promote anti-drug educational policies. However, in practice there are obstacles facing the schools in promoting anti-drug educational policies. How could appropriate support be offered to the schools? How can the obstacles that assist in the promotion of anti-drug education in schools be overcome? These issues must be looked into.

**(3) On community: When promoting anti-drug educational policies in the community, different organizations and associations need to coordinate and cooperate in order to avoid multiplication of resources or an inadequacy of services. The community also lacks consensus regarding the problem of drug abuse and this affects the work regarding anti-drug policies.**

The community is one of the social arenas young people are most involved in apart from their schools and families. There is a need to create a drug-free community for the adolescents to help them lead a happy and healthy life.

However, when promoting anti-drug educational awareness in the community, the lack of coordination and cooperation among different organizations and associations leads to either a multiplication of resources or an inadequacy of services. In order to promote anti-drug education effectively in the community, collaboration between governmental and non-governmental organizations is very important.

How could collaboration within the community be strengthened and communities



at risk be identified? How could a consensus on the problem of drug abuse in the community be reached in order for anti-drug education to be firmly rooted in the community? These issues need to be addressed when promoting anti-drug educational measures in the community. Could the Fight Crime Committee of each district take on a more active role in addressing youth drug abuse? It is worthwhile discussing these issues further.

**5. From the results of survey and focussed group discussions, the young people interviewed pointed out four essential factors in the promotional strategies for anti-drug education – factual, interactive, multi-faceted and specific.**

**(1) Factual: That is fact-based, e.g. providing true life stories of former drug users, explanation about the harms of drug abuse from a medical perspective – which is interesting to young people.**

From the focussed group discussions, it was understood that most interviewees preferred factual promotional strategies to the invented stories or over-exaggerated comments. True life stories narrated by former drug users were found to be more convincing.

For the five forms of promotional strategies listed by the survey, 74.6% and 70.0% of the young people interviewed respectively regarded “narration by former drug users regarding the harms of drug abuse” and “explanation of bodily harm caused by drug abuse from a medical perspective” as the most effective promotional strategies. Inviting celebrities to promote anti-drug messages is viewed as the least effective measure. Only 39.5% thought celebrities were effective.

Life stories from former drug users and an explanation of the bodily harm caused by drug abuse from a medical perspective are believed to be helpful in promoting anti-drug education. Recent research found that the use of ketamines not only damages the neurological system but also causes bladder dysfunction and affects daily life – this certainly gives cause for alarm to adolescents and would make them think twice before using ketamines. This provides an example of how an explanation on drug abuse from a medical perspective can be an effective promotional strategy.

Anti-drug abuse promotional strategies must be based on facts. The life stories from former drug users and an explanation from a medical perspective provide clarification and a clearer perspective for young people.

**(2) Interactive: Interactive learning and outreach programmes from organizations providing treatment and rehabilitation services consolidate the knowledge of drug abuse for young people.**

From the focussed group discussions, most young people interviewed regarded one-way talks as not being enough to rouse their interest on the issue. Alternatively, through interactive learning, sharing and discussion, the interest of young people on the issue of drug abuse can be increased. Some interviewees reported that outreach programmes from organizations providing treatment and rehabilitation services were useful in informing them of the problem.

From the five suggestions listed in the survey of anti-drug education, 62.9% of young people interviewed supported arranging regular outreach programmes with organizations providing treatment and rehabilitation services for high school students.

We see that through interactive learning and outreach programmes young people gain knowledge on the problem of drug abuse by direct participation and discussions.

**(3) Multi-faceted: Anti-drug education should be a multi-faceted approach, and through activities like drama, sports and multimedia information, enhance the awareness of the harms of drugs.**

From the focussed group discussions, the interviewees stated that they found greater interest in drama shows, ball games or multimedia tailored for young people offered by the schools. They found that their awareness regarding the issue of drug abuse was enhanced through participating in those activities.

Studies on overseas research was found useful in increasing the authorities confidence to help local young people resist drug abuse through music, drama, sports and other cultural activities and to establish healthy lifestyles. Overseas experiences set good examples for local development.

The multi-faceted activities tailored for young people enhanced their interest of participation and their awareness on the issue of drug abuse.

**(4) Specific: Anti-drug education needs to be specific for different groups and communities, in order to formulate specific promotional strategies.**

From the survey, of the 107 young people interviewed who claimed the existing preventive and promotional education as “ineffective”, 30.8% of them stated that the policies and strategies did not reach the high-risk adolescents.

During the focussed group discussions, some students and at-risk young people described the existing anti-drug education as being out of touch with the actual needs of high-risk adolescents. A school principal interviewed said most young people and parents who took part in anti-drug educational activities were not at risk of drug abuse, compared with those high-risk adolescents who did not take part in those activities.

Moral values vary among different groups of young people and so do their attitude towards drug abuse. The educational needs for adolescents of different ages, sex, ethnic backgrounds and high-risk groups are also different. The problems associated with youth drug abuse are also unique in different districts. Therefore anti-drug activities and the promotional strategies need to be specific towards the needs of different groups and communities, which would help promote anti-drug educational policies effectively. More delicate research should be done to meet the educational needs of different adolescent groups.

**6. Over 60% of correspondents reported TV as the major media source for receiving anti-drug messages. However, from the focussed group discussions, some interviewees regarded current TV related to the topic as over-exaggerated and untrue and thus not convincing to them.**

From the survey, 63.8% of the correspondents reported TV as the major media source for receiving anti-drug messages. Most interviewees from the focussed group discussions also shared similar views that TV was the major media source for receiving anti-drug messages.

Some interviewees stated that TV was an effective media source for preventive

educational and promotional campaigns as it was readily accessible with attractive visual images and widely distributed as well. This proves the invaluable role of public media in promoting anti-drug education.

On the other hand, some interviewees stated that the messages delivered by related TV programmes had been unclear and even untrue. Some even stated that exaggerated or scaring promotional tactics could be counterproductive – they were not only unconvincing, but in some cases also aroused the curiosity of adolescents to take drugs.

During the focussed group discussions with students, the target clients of outreach services and young drug abusers had similar views over the exaggerated or scaring promotional tactics. They even doubted the trust-worthiness of related promotions.

*Senior primary school students – “I think the message delivered is unclear and even ambiguous, and you do not even know what it actually wants to tell us – like it said you may pass wind after taking ecstasy, but you pass wind anyway even if you do not take any ecstasy! So what will actually happen after taking ecstasy?”*

*Junior high school students – “I think the contents are overly-exaggerated and may even be counter-productive. I have a friend who had been taking drugs for more than a year already, and up to now he does not notice any side effects as claimed by the promotion. That makes him believe that different bodies react differently to drug abuse so he just ignores the message and keeps taking drugs.”*

*Senior high school students – “I think the contents are unclear. The adverse effects of drug abuse cannot be seen immediately so they should explain the symptoms of the adverse effects of drug abuse according to the time frame.”*

*Target clients of outreach services – “I think the contents are overly-exaggerated – for example, in the programme regarding the use of ketamines, a drug abuser was shown being hit on his head by a hammer. I do not even know what they are talking about – I just want to switch to a different channel!”*

*Adolescent drug abusers – “I think the contents are untrue and they just want to terrify us. It is useless to us and we do not even care about them.”*

TV serves as the major media source for adolescents receiving anti-drug abuse information. It is thus important to fully make use of TV for promoting anti-drug educational campaigns. But the contents of related TV programmes must be clear and not exaggerated or unreal – otherwise they may be counterproductive.

**7. Young people would prefer to talk to friends when facing problems related to drug abuse. Research has shown that most young people started attempting drugs due to peer pressure. It is therefore worthwhile investigating further how this pressure can be put to good use.**

Of the 532 correspondents interviewed by the survey, 46.5% would prefer to talk to friends when facing problems related to drug abuse. However, as shown in the database of the Central Registry of Drug Abuse, most young people started attempting drugs because of peer pressure.

In the interviews, scholars pointed out that whether peers provide a positive or negative influence depends on the situations. Therefore the role of peers is of critical importance when the problems of drug abuse arise.

The survey also shows that 63.0% of the correspondents agreed “not to take drug abusers as friends”. 20.8% disagreed while 15.8% were unsure. These results show that most young people refuse to take drug abusers as friends so as to avoid negative peer influence. But at the same time, problems arise from the lack of social acceptance to drug abusers. Therefore, in formulating preventive educational measures, it is necessary to address the issue of how to guide young people away from temptations.

- 8. Figures showed that the trend of young people taking drugs across the border was on the rise. With the increasing convenience of transportation across the border as well as simplified customs procedures, the issue of drug abuse across the border is expected to worsen. In the long run, it is necessary to cooperate with the Mainland government to implement anti-drug preventive education effectively.**

The problem of young people taking drugs across the border has risen alarmingly over the last year. According to the data received from the Customs, there were 27 cases of adolescents under the age of 21 getting arrested for misappropriation and carriage of drugs across the border in the year 2007 – a rise of 170% compared with the previous year.

With the merger of the economies of Hong Kong and the Mainland as well as the convenience of transport and simplified customs procedures, e.g. 24-hour opening of Lok Ma Chau Control Point and the installation of E-channels in all Control Points, young people find it increasingly convenient to take drugs across the border. A scholar interviewed pointed out that young people nowadays use the Home Return Permit card rather than the Home-Visiting Certificate when crossing the border – this not only simplifies customs procedures but also prevents parents from being able to check on their children's customs records, thus encouraging adolescents to take drugs across the border.

To deal with a worsening trend of young people taking drugs across the border, it is important in the long run to cooperate closely with the Mainland government when implementing anti-drug preventive educational and promotional programmes.

## **Recommendations**

**The mission of the Narcotics Division to combat the drug abuse problem through the following five-pronged strategy is to formulate a policy on anti-drug matters and to coordinate anti-drug efforts by law enforcement, preventive education, research, international co-operation and treatment and rehabilitation services. To deal with the increasingly serious and complex problem of youth drug abuse,**

**preventive educational and promotional strategies are of critical importance.**

**This study reviewed the current situations of the anti-drug educational and publicity strategies, including the difficulties encountered and the effectiveness of the work. To effectively tackle drug abuse, we should consider the following five major principles:**

- (1) Affirm the importance of preventive education and publicity strategies to prevent harm to the public in future.**
- (2) Preventive educational and promotional campaigns should be a long-term plan and must be carried out consistently.**
- (3) The goals and targets of preventive education should be clear and accepted by the public.**
- (4) Preventive education should be promoted through families, schools and communities.**
- (5) Preventive education should be specific.**

**Based on the five principles above, we have the following recommendations:**

- (1) Prevention is better than cure. To effectively combat youth drug abuse, preventive education is the most important. It is recommended that the government play an important role in maintaining the level of resources for the continued success of promoting anti-drug education.**

**There is a five-pronged strategy currently employed by the Narcotics Division in targeting drug abuse – law enforcement, preventive education, research, international co-operation and treatment and rehabilitation services. The annual funding for the above strategies had been substantial – though the proportion for preventive educational and promotional campaigns had been small and comprised approximately only 3% of the annual budget for the previous years. To effectively stop young people from taking drugs, to help them understand the harm caused by drug abuse and establish positive and healthy**

**lifestyles, preventive educational and promotional strategies are essential. Thus, it is recommended that the government play an important role in maintaining the level of resources for the continued success of promoting anti-drug education.**

- (2) In order to keep track of young drug users, systematic collection of data and compilation of statistics should take place every 2 years, instead of every 4, as in the current practice. It is recommended that primary and secondary students in particular should be targeted on a bi-yearly basis in order to formulate up-to-date strategies and services against the problem of drug abuse.**

**The collecting and publishing of relevant information regarding youth drug abuse relies on two systems – one from the Central Registry of Drug Abuse which collates information regularly on drug abuse cases on a voluntary basis, and the other from a survey of drug use among students every four years. In order to keep track of young drug users, a systematic collection of data and compilation of statistics should take place every 2 years, instead of every 4, as in the current practice. This would give a more accurate picture of the latest situations among young drug users. It is also recommended that primary and secondary students in particular should be targeted in order to provide appropriate preventive education or guidance services as early as possible.**

- (3) To strengthen the protective factors around young people with a holistic approach and to promote healthy lifestyles through families, schools and communities in order to enhance their ability to resist peer pressure.**

**Young people are important human resources for society. Education from family, school and community play an important role in helping them lead a healthy life. With guidance from agencies abroad experienced in dealing with the problem of youth drug abuse, the local anti-drug promotional strategies should aim to strengthen the protective factors around young**



**people with a holistic approach, promote healthy lifestyles through families, schools and communities. Meanwhile, it should reduce the risk factors of young people to prevent them from taking drugs.**

**(4) Regarding the promotional strategies of anti-drug education, the following five recommendations are suggested:**

**(a) To set up a promotional team staffed by health care workers and former drug users with a passion to promote anti-drug education via schools and communities.**

**Results from the poll and the focus group interviews showed that most correspondents felt anti-drug messages are most effective when conveyed by former drug users. Most correspondents want to learn about the impact of drugs on health. Setting up a promotional team staffed by health care workers and former drug users who are passionate about promoting anti-drug education via schools and communities is recommended.**

**(b) To strengthen the promotion of the anti-drug hotline service, information will be provided on the harm caused by drug abuse and on drug prevention, and counselling will be given to young people and parents in need.**

**In view of the rising trends of young drug users, complicated by the rapid development of new drugs, many young people, parents and teachers, with limited knowledge of drugs, feel helpless when tackling drug abuse problems. An anti-drug telephone enquiry service has been set up by the Narcotics Division but is not known to the community. To strengthen the promotion of the anti-drug hotline service, information will be provided on the harm caused by drug abuse and on drug prevention, and counselling will be given to young people and parents in need.**

- (c) To facilitate interactive education through peers and former drug users - these should be helpful in promoting anti-drug education.**

**Figures from Central Registry of Drug Abuse showed that most young people attempted drugs due to peer pressure. Meanwhile this study found that most young people preferred to talk to friends when facing problems related to drug abuse. These reflect the importance of peers in the growth of young people. Most young people trust their peers to quite a reasonable extent. They are happy to listen to them and are also easily influenced by them. Thus in dealing with youth drug abuse, interactive education through peers and also training of former drug users as counsellors is recommended. These should be helpful in influencing young people in the right way.**

- (d) To strengthen anti-drug education in the community, and formulate specific promotional strategies based on different groups and communities.**

**To promote anti-drug education effectively, collaboration and coordination in the community are of crucial importance. Attention needs to be paid when promoting education according to the age, sex, ethnicity and risk-factor of young people. Thus the formulation of preventive strategies should focus on the needs of different target groups and different communities. It is also recommended that information networks, especially the internet and mobile networks be utilized as media for promotion and education.**

- (e) To enhance the coordinative role of doctors and social workers in the community, in order to identify youth drug abusers at an early stage and provide appropriate services and referrals.**

**The social worker interviewed in this study substantiated the importance of medical check-ups in helping young drug**

**abusers get treatment and rehabilitation, and thus general practitioners have an important role to play in the community. It is recommended that the coordinative role of doctors and social workers be enhanced, in order to identify young drug abusers at an early stage and provide appropriate services and referrals.**