



For immediate release

**Survey reflects the government should step up
to promote and support smoking cessation services
Organizers set 1 January as a Quit Day and urge smokers to
give up smoking**

Hong Kong 10 December 2007 – Results of an opinion survey reflected existing smoking cessation services are far from sufficient and the government has to review its current anti-smoking policy. The way forward of the anti-smoking policy should shift to focus on enhancing cessation services with a view to solving the smoking problem at source.

The Quit Winners Club and Alliance for Patients' Mutual Help Organisations jointly commissioned the Public Opinion Programme of the University of Hong Kong to gauge public opinion on the impact and effectiveness of the enlarged smoking ban policy and the current smoking cessation services in coincidence with the first anniversary of the policy on 1 January 2008.

A total of 1,287 persons, aged 18 or above, were interviewed between 12 October and 9 November 2007. There were 502 smokers among the respondents.

Ms Anita Chan, representative of the Quit Winners Club, said Hong Kong people generally felt that the enlarged smoking ban policy has brought benefits.

In asking about the government's future focus on anti-smoking policy, more than 60% of the general public said emphasis should be placed on strengthening law enforcement and increasing beat patrol. Another 60% preferred the government to step up publicity of smoking-cessation services, while 48 % said the government should increase subsidies to assist smoker in buying smoking cessation drugs.



Nearly half of the smokers responding to the survey said they had considered quitting smoking and that the main reasons were personal benefit and their family's health.

Respondents who were smokers have tried and failed to quit smoking for about 3.53 times on average. The most cited obstacle was "lack of determination" (52.6%), followed by peer influence and socializing needs (40.9%).

Chairman of the Alliance for Patients' Mutual Help Organisations, Mr. Cheung Tak Hai, said: "The survey suggests that mere determination would not be enough for those who want to quit smoking. We need a holistic approach, encompassing counseling, family support and medication therapy. The survey also reflected that more smoking cessation services, counseling and resources should be increase for the implementation of an effective anti-smoking policy"

"Resources devoted to smoking cessation should not be seen as expenditure but investment, because the government would save healthcare cost in the long run as citizens' health improve," Mr. Cheung added.

To support smokers to give up smoking, distinguished guests including Dr. Kwok Ka Ki, Legislative Councillor representing the medical constituency; Professor Kenneth Lee, Associate Director of the School of Pharmacy, the Chinese University of Hong Kong; Dr. Geoffrey Lieu, Program Director of Master in Health Services Management, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University; Dr. Lo Wing Lok, Chairman of People's Health Actions; Dr. Shih Tai Cho, Vice-President of The Hong Kong Medical Association; and Dr. Homer Tso, Chairman of the Hong Kong Council on Smoking and Health were invited to sign a charter with the two organizers appealing to all smokers to pledge giving up smoking from 1 January 2008 onwards. The charter also seeks to rally public support to smokers who try to quit.

Followed by the signing ceremony was an open forum for exchanging views on future directions of smoking cessation policy.

END



About Quit Winners Club

Quit Winners Club is initiated by a group of ex-smokers, health care and other professionals, which seeks to actively encourage current smokers to quit smoking, support ex-smokers to remain tobacco-free and develop programmes to generate interest from the public in the pursuit of smoke-free environment.

Website: www.quitwinners.org

About The Alliance for Patients' Mutual Help Organizations (APMHO):

APMHO was founded in 1993. It has 36 member organizations of 24 chronic illnesses including cancer, psychiatric, genetic and various diseases that affect heart, kidney, lung, liver, eye, brain etc.

Website: <http://www.apmho.org>

General public can sign the charter via the above web site.

Media enquiries: Veronica Sze or Zebrina Lau at 6440 9564.