

## **Strong Association between Colorectal Neoplasia and Coronary Artery Disease**

Colorectal cancer is the second most common cancer in Hong Kong, with over 3,000 new cases reported every year. About half of those patients eventually die of the disease. However, most of the colorectal cancer can be prevented by screening. The classical pathway for developing colorectal cancer is the adenoma-cancer sequence, with 95% of colorectal cancer developed through this pathway. Thus, if the polyp (or adenoma) is detected early and removed, cancer can be prevented.

On the other hand, coronary artery disease (CAD) is the number one killer in Hong Kong. On average there are 3.5 CAD patients in every 1,000 people. Both CAD and colorectal neoplasia (CN) share common risk factors: male sex, old age, smoking, diabetes, hyperlipidemia, sedentary lifestyle, high body mass index, high fat and low fibre diet. Thus, subjects with CAD may represent a high-risk group for developing CN. A research team from the Department of Medicine, HKU Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine, has recently identified strong association between colorectal neoplasia (cancer and adenoma) and coronary artery disease, which bears significant implication in the prevention of colorectal cancer.

The studies found that CAD positive patients are at higher risk for developing CN (30.3%) than CAD negative patients (19.4%) owing to a set of common risk factors for CN and CAD. Screening by colonoscopy for these patients is therefore mandatory to help discover CN which may sometimes be asymptomatic. This can also help to prevent colorectal cancer by identifying and subsequently removing adenoma at their early stage of development.