

## **HKU provides First Smoking Cessation Service for Female Smokers**

Although smoking prevalence is lower among women than men, a survey conducted by The University of Hong Kong found that approximately 1167 (9%) of the deaths among women are attributable to smoking. The number of women smokers is rising, with those aged from 30 to 39 showing the sharpest increase. However, most of them had not participated in any smoking cessation service. Among those who tried to quit with the help of professional advice and counseling, women smokers perceived more difficulties and have lower confidence in quitting, and hence a slightly lower quit rate than male smokers.

Acknowledging the need for a gender-specific smoking cessation service to women smokers, a research team at The University of Hong Kong Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine, initiated the “Women Against Tobacco Taskforce” (WATT). WATT provides a community-based smoking cessation programme tailored to address the major barriers faced by women smokers including hormonal influences, pregnancy, fear of weight gain, lack of social support and depression. This project aimed to promote quitting among women smokers in the community, and encourage and support those who want to quit by providing face-to-face and/or telephone counseling.

The establishment of the WATT helps to promote quitting among women smokers and to arouse public awareness of the hazardous effects of smoking, with an emphasis on women-specific problems and diseases. The trained community workers provide brief advice to women smokers about quitting, and make referrals to the University of Hong Kong Department of Nursing Studies for individualized counseling tailored for women smokers which improve their self-efficacy to resist smoking, and to deal with withdrawal symptoms so as to gain confidence and increase control over their smoking behavior.

All women smokers as well as relatives, friends and coworkers of women smokers are encouraged to join our Women Smoking Cessation Programme, which is free of charge. Enquiry and registration hotline are 6752-6266 or 2819-2692 or visit website at <http://www3.hku.hk/quitnow>