

THE FAMILY PLANNING ASSOCIATION OF HONG KONG

Chairman's Address

to the 63rd Annual General Meeting on Thursday, 6 December 2018

by Dr Cheung Kai Bun
Chairperson

Dr Leung, Professor Ngan, Members and Staff of the Association, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to address the AGM for the first time in the capacity of Chairman of the Association. On behalf of the Council and the Association, I would like to express our appreciation to Dr Leung Wing Cheong, President of The Hong Kong College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, for being here as our Guest of Honour. The College and our Association share a common mission of improving women's sexual and reproductive health in Hong Kong. We look forward to hearing from Dr Leung his insights in this field.

Two days ago, we released the latest findings from our Association's Family Planning Knowledge, Attitude and Practice Survey 2017. This Survey has been conducted every five years since 1967, and I believe it is one of the longest running serial surveys on family planning in the world. The findings are of interest to the public, as well as policy makers, researchers, demographers, and those in the field of sexual and reproductive health. I would like to take this opportunity to share some of the key findings with you all.

Hong Kong's low fertility rate has been of concern for some years. In fact women's *ideal* number of children has remained more or less stable at 1.6 since the 2002 Survey. Just over half the respondents still regard "two children" as the ideal. Nearly one third of the respondents favoured having only one child. Those who desire to have no children are still the minority, at less than 10% of the respondents.

In terms of their *actual* parity, the surveyed women had an average of 1.28 children, slightly higher than the record low of 1.24 in 2012. The proportion of women with one child (38.5%) continued to rise and has exceeded the proportion of women with two children (34%). On the other hand, the proportion of childless women dropped from the peak of 23.4% in 2012 to 20.7% in 2017. Around 15% of the surveyed women said they desired a child or another child, but another 15% were as yet undecided. One of the core values of our Association has always been to respect our clients' own free choice with regard to their family formation, and we strive to help clients achieve their ideal family composition. Given the negative impact of advancing age on female fertility, we encourage couples to plan early for their families, and urge those encountering difficulty in conceiving to seek help without delay.

Sometimes couples hesitate or postpone childbirth because of external barriers. In this Survey, respondents who have no children or only one child quoted “heavy financial burden” and “heavy responsibilities” as their main reasons. More childless women also said they wanted “more time and space for personal development”. Regarding possible public policies to encourage childbirth, respondents in this Survey compared to the last Survey five years ago were more positive towards strategies such as financial incentives, strengthened social support for parents, free pre-school education and improvement in the quality of education, etc. We hope that these may be policy direction that our government will duly consider, with a view to removing the barriers to fertility in our rapidly aging population.

For choice of contraceptive methods, the male condom is still by far the most popular. Almost 80% of respondents were currently using it, and 96.2% of ever users were satisfied with it. We have reminded the public that consistency of use and proper technique are important to ensure the condom’s effectiveness. It is reassuring to note that the prevalence of abortion continues to drop. Women who ever had an induced abortion decreased from 26.3% in 2002 to 11.5% in 2017. The major reasons for the abortion were “not psychologically prepared” and “financial constraints”. We again urge women who have an unplanned pregnancy to seek professional help through proper channels in order to avoid making reckless decisions that they might regret in future.

In this Survey, couples had sex for an average of 3.7 times per month, slightly lower than the finding in 2012. Nonetheless, the majority of female and male respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with their marriage and sex life. “Crowded living space” and “sharing the same room with children” were the top factors affecting their sex life. Although the frequency of sex depends on individual couples’ needs and preferences and should not be taken as the only indicator of the quality of sex life, we do believe that a healthy and satisfactory sex life is an important part of marital harmony and couple relationship. Couples can be more flexible and creative in respect of time and location for sex and intimacy. Newly-weds are welcome to attend our Association’s “Talks on Sex and Intimacy” to enhance their sexual knowledge and communication skills. Those experiencing sexual disharmony can seek help from our Sex Coaching and Sex Therapy services. Oftentimes having the courage to address the problem is already half the battle won.

In closing, I would like to thank the Government for its steadfast support, and our donors for their generous contributions, especially the Community Chest, the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, and the Sir Robert Hotung Charitable Fund. My heartfelt gratitude also goes to all the volunteers and staff for their dedication and diligence. And finally, I would like to thank you all for coming today and for your unfailing support of the Family Planning Association of Hong Kong.

Thank you.