



For Immediate Release

STRONG DEMAND FOR TELEHEALTH SERVICES AMONG PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV IN HONG KONG, DEDICATED MOBILE APP FILLS GAP FOR MUCH-NEEDED PATIENT CARE SUPPORT

- *Over the past year, 58% of people living with HIV (PLHIV) and 25% of individuals at-risk (IARs) in Hong Kong increased their usage of telehealth services, driven by the availability of new telehealth services during the pandemic*
- *Most PLHIV and IARs currently experience one-way telehealth communications, but PLHIV and IARs who have not yet tried telehealth services hope to engage in two-way communications with healthcare professionals or community-based organisations*
- *Launched in August 2022, My Care Diary mobile application helps PLHIV improve self-management of HIV care through educational content and gamified features*

Hong Kong, 28 November 2022 – As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to disrupt the access and delivery of essential care in Hong Kong, Gilead Sciences today, ahead of World AIDS Day on 1 December, announced findings from a survey conducted with the support of Hong Kong AIDS Foundation (HKAF) to examine changes in the motivations and use of telehealth services for people living with HIV (PLHIV) and individuals at-risk (IARs) in Hong Kong. The survey forms part of an Asia-Pacific study based on responses from 1,531 respondents, comprising 787 PLHIV and 744 IARs, across nine countries/territories (Hong Kong, India, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam).

Survey shows significant improvement in telehealth services adoption by PLHIV and IARs

The Hong Kong survey findings were based on online survey responses from 200 respondents, comprising 100 PLHIV and 100 IARs, between June and September 2022. The survey aimed to develop an understanding of how respondents use HIV telehealth services, covering online consultations and preparation for medical appointments, as well as how they use electronic platforms to receive self-management and preventive information on HIV care. Two community-based organisations were also interviewed to gain insights on the engagement configurations for PLHIV and IARs during COVID-19. The survey builds on the first Pulse Survey on HIV Care under COVID-19 conducted in 2020, whereby only 36% PLHIV and IARs in Hong Kong receive telehealth services or consultations with their doctors and 50% of PLHIV reduced or did not go for follow-up healthcare professional consultations¹.

Highlights of 2022 survey findings:

- In Hong Kong, over the past year, 58% of PLHIV and 25% of IARs increased their usage of telehealth services. While 58% of PLHIV and 62% of IARs indicated that the most commonly used service was phone consultation, mobile apps top the most commonly used education tool, for 65% PLHIV and 51% of IARs.

¹ Hung CC, et al. (2022). Impact of COVID-19 on the HIV care continuum in Asia: Insights from people living with HIV, key populations, and HIV healthcare providers. PLoS One. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0270831. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35857755/>.

- This uptick in telehealth usage was attributed to the availability of new services launched during the COVID-19 period. Hong Kong respondents stated that reduced travelling time, improved access to HIV care services, and the opportunity to gather additional information outside of appointment time were the top three reasons for their usage of telehealth services.
- Respondents who use telehealth services indicated that they are mostly engaged in one-way communications, which include laboratory test results updates, appointment reminders, billing, and e-prescriptions. Respondents who have not yet tried telehealth services hope to engage in two-way communications with healthcare professionals or community-based organisations
- The survey also found 39% of PLHIV and 40% IARs respectively feel uncomfortable about the lack of in-person contact when using telehealth services. About 37% of PLHIV and 40% of IARs also feel worried about data privacy when using telehealth services, resulting in demands for in-person communication despite the availability of telehealth services.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed gaps in healthcare services not only in Hong Kong, but also worldwide. As we commit to EQUALIZE, a call to action by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) during World AIDS Day 2022, the findings of the study affirm the demand for telehealth services,” said **Dr. Tin-Hung Wong, Director, Medical Affairs (HIV and Coronavirus), Gilead Sciences**. “Not only do healthcare professionals and community-based organizations need to implement innovative forms of care, such as providing e-prescriptions, but healthcare systems must also adapt to the needs of patients when modernizing HIV services.”

“The pandemic has accelerated both the need for telehealth services and the development of such services in Hong Kong, enabling PLHIV and IARs to play a more proactive role in self-management of their health. We will continue to explore the direction of development and improvement of various telehealth service platforms, from strengthening privacy protection of PLHIV and IARs to improving information sharing channels. By integrating telehealth services and traditional in-person consultations, we could improve the overall results of HIV management and prevention,” said **Dr. Wilson Lam, Executive Board Member of HKAF and Specialist in Infectious Disease**.

Dedicated mobile app to encourage patient-reported outcome

In response to the global drive to enhance PLHIV’s quality of life, in August 2022, Gilead Sciences and the Hong Kong Coalition of AIDS Service Organizations (HKCASO) jointly launched the My Care Diary educational mobile app for PLHIV in Hong Kong. The app is managed by HKCASO and no personal identifiable information will be collected from users to protect the privacy of PLHIV. As a trusted source of health knowledge for PLHIV, the app features specially curated content to help them plan conversations with healthcare professionals prior to medical appointments and reinforce the value of self-care and quality of life. It also carries gamification features with animated avatars and interactive educational content.

“Given the fact that stigma still exists in society, PLHIV may be reluctant to actively ask for help or support from peers or even healthcare professionals. My Care Diary is a handy tool which gives users easy access to tips and knowledge around HIV self-management. While telehealth services are good additions to support PLHIV, it is equally important to empower them to take the initiative to better manage their health and enhance quality of life,” said **Professor Phoenix Kit-Han Mo, Chairlady of HKCASO, Associate Professor and Director of the Center for Health Behaviours Research of the Jockey Club School of Public Health and Primary Care of the Chinese University of Hong Kong**. “As we continue to refine features in the app in 2023, we hope to introduce in-app upgrades like human avatars and reward systems for the characters, as well as a note section and monthly health information updates, to further enhance the user experience and educational value provided by My Care Diary.”

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About Hong Kong AIDS Foundation (HKAF)

The Hong Kong AIDS Foundation was established in 1991. The Foundation's mission is to limit the spread of HIV Infection in the community. Throughout the years, the Foundation has been actively engaged in the promotion of AIDS education, the provision of services, and the nurturing of a harmonious and caring environment for those infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS. For more details, please visit our website at <http://www.aids.org.hk>.

Hong Kong Coalition of AIDS Service Organizations (HKCASO)

Hong Kong Coalition of AIDS Service Organizations was inaugurated in Hong Kong SAR in February 1998. It exists primarily to strengthen the capacity of member organisations to respond to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Hong Kong. The Coalition also acts as a network with other community and institution-based bodies that provide services or participate in the delivery of HIV/AIDS-related prevention, care or research.

About Gilead Sciences

Gilead Sciences, Inc. is a research-based biopharmaceutical company that discovers, develops and commercializes innovative medicines in areas of unmet medical need. The company strives to transform and simplify care for people with life-threatening illnesses around the world. Gilead has operations in more than 35 countries worldwide, with global headquarters in Foster City, California.

For nearly 30 years, Gilead has been a leading innovator in the field of HIV, driving advances in treatment, prevention and cure research. Today, it's estimated that more than 12 million people living with HIV globally receive antiretroviral therapy provided by Gilead or one of the company's generic manufacturing partners.

APPENDIX

About the HIV Asia Study 2.0: Enhancing HIV services to build back post COVID-19 pandemic

The HIV Asia Study 2.0 regional survey results were based on responses from 1,531 respondents, comprising 787 PLHIV and 744 IARs, across nine markets in the Asia Pacific (Hong Kong, India, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam) received during June to September 2022. The Hong Kong findings of the survey were based on responses received from 200 respondents, comprising 100 PLHIV and 100 IARs, between June and September 2022. The survey explored the perspective of PLHIV and IARs to better understand how HIV telehealth services can be improved.

The quantitative online survey was compiled by Cerner Enviza (formerly Kantar Health) with funding from Gilead Sciences. It aims to define optimal engagement configurations using telehealth services to improve access to HIV testing and preventive medications. Two community-based organisations from each market were also interviewed to gain insights on the engagement configurations for PLHIV and IARs during COVID-19.