

**HONG KONG
GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
SERVICES**

**DAILY
INFORMATION
BULLETIN**

Monday, August 21, 1972

METHADONE MAINTENANCE SCHEMES BEGIN IN NOVEMBER

The Medical and Health Department will begin a methadone maintenance trial scheme in November this year designed to treat a number of addicts on Hong Kong Island by blocking their craving for heroin, morphine, or opium

For addicts in Kowloon and the New Territories, another pilot scheme will apply -- to be carried out by the Hong Kong Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society.

Basically, the schemes seek to substitute one drug for another, but methadone, a synthetic drug, has the advantage of giving the addict the opportunity to return to a responsible life.

The methadone maintenance form of treatment has been developed extensively in the United States since the middle of the 1960s, and similar schemes are being conducted in Canada, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere.

Methadone is itself an addictive drug, but there is substantial evidence to show that the substitution of methadone for heroin, or morphine, allows the addict to carry on with his normal occupations in circumstances that do not cause family disturbances or disrupt regular routines.

Methadone has shown itself to be especially beneficial when administered, under proper controls, to hardcore addicts.

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The Medical and Health Department's scheme is to last three years. It involves an intake of 150 addicts in the first year, and 200 in each of the second and third years, making a total of 550 in the end.

Patients will come from the Central Registry of the Secretariat for Home Affairs, the Society for the Aid and Rehabilitation of Drug Addicts (SARDA), and referrals from government clinics.

They will be limited to men in groups of 10 a time, who will be given a dosage expected to last between 24 and 48 hours.

The dosage is a "blockade dose," that is, sufficient to block off the craving for heroin.

The pharmacological effect of methadone has been well established, and it is expected to work well among local addicts. But patients will be tested through analysis of urine samples by modern equipment to find out whether they are still taking the addictive drug while under treatment.

They will have to travel daily from their homes to the former mental hospital in Sai Ying Poon, now being converted for this purpose. They will be provided with travelling expenses, and where necessary, also with a meal.

The two pilot schemes are expected to provide information on four points:

- * Whether among gainfully employed addicts, methadone is an effective treatment to achieve the elimination of heroin hunger and craving.
- * Whether among hardcore heroin addicts, successful social rehabilitation can be achieved for those participating in the maintenance programme.

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- * The degree of "acceptance" by drug addicts of such a scheme as a permanent service. It is realised that success or failure of the out-patient treatment proposed depends entirely on such acceptances.
- * To locate all absentees or "drop-outs," as it is considered of great value to learn the reasons for their rejection of such a treatment regime.

The estimated cost of the scheme is about \$2.2 million with an additional \$128,500 for non-recurrent expenditure, such as a thin layer chromatography, and ultraviolet analysis, equipment.

But the Department's scheme must not be confused with the other pilot study to be carried out by the Hong Kong Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society. This is expected to be financed from the Lotteries Fund at the rate of about \$200,000 a year for three years.

This second scheme will take care of patients from Kowloon and the New Territories. It will be limited to 100 addicts, half of whom will receive full treatment while the other half will constitute a control group -- the latter to be treated with varying quantities of methadone.

While the two schemes involve different pilot studies, the aims are the same.

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RESERVOIRS OVERFLOWING

The heavy rains during the past few days have boosted the total water storage in Hong Kong's reservoirs to 88 per cent of the full storage capacity.

At 9 a.m. today, the total stood at 51,318 million gallons.

Seven reservoirs are now overflowing. They are the Jubilee Reservoir, Kowloon Reservoirs, Shek Lei Pui Reservoir, Shek Pik Reservoir, Tai Tam Reservoir, Aberdeen Reservoirs and Pokfulam Reservoir.

In addition, three others are about to overflow. They are the Wong Nei Chung, Tai Lam Chung and Lower Shing Mun reservoirs.

Plover Cove, the biggest reservoir, was holding 35,877 million gallons at 9 a.m. today, that is, about 86 per cent of its total capacity.

Rainfall in the past three days over catchment areas varied from 97 mm (3.82 inches) at Shek Pik Reservoir to 288 mm (11.34 inches) at the Aberdeen Reservoirs.

The average rainfall over Hong Kong and Kowloon's catchment areas between midnight last (Sunday) night and 9 a.m. today was 129.5 mm (5.10 inches) and 98 mm (3.86 inches) respectively.

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330 ADDITIONAL PARKING SPACES FOR WAN CHAI

An area to the east of the helicopter landing pad in Wan Chai is to be turned into a temporary open-air car park soon to provide 330 much needed parking spaces.

Work will probably start early next month and should be completed towards the end of this year.

A short length of new road to give access to the car park will be completed in time for the opening which is expected to be some time in December.

A spokesman for the Highways Office said the metered parking spaces now available near the helicopter landing ground would be removed on the opening of the temporary car park.

"It will also serve as a test case for parking requirements in Wan Chai after the opening of the cross-harbour tunnel," he said.

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EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

A government spokesman announced today that Mr. Lee Quo-wei ceased to be temporarily an Unofficial Member of the Executive Council with effect from August 18, on the return to Hong Kong of Mr. Szeto Wai.

With effect from last Saturday, Mr. H.J.C. Browne also ceased to be a temporary Unofficial Member of the Executive Council.

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PRISON CHIEF OFF TO WORLD REHABILITATION CONGRESS IN SYDNEY

Hong Kong's Commissioner of Prisons, Mr. Tom Garner, will be chairman of the Sectional Workshop on Drug Dependence for the 12th World Rehabilitation Congress which is to be held in Sydney from August 27 to September 1.

Mr. Garner left Hong Kong yesterday on vacation leave, during which he will also be looking at drug treatment and rehabilitation work in various countries including Australia, New Zealand, Mexico and the United States.

Hong Kong's 64-member delegation to the 12th World Rehabilitation Congress is led by Dr. Harry Fang, who is Chairman of the Rehabilitation Division of the Hong Kong Council of Social Service.

Some 2,000 delegates from all parts of the world are expected to attend the Congress. They include social workers, physiotherapists, nurses, teachers and others in related fields.

The theme of the Congress is "Planning Rehabilitation: Environment - Incentives - Self-help." The Congress also marks the 50th anniversary of the Rehabilitation International, a 60-member world-wide organisation for rehabilitation workers.

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SIR HUGH TO SEE SUMMER CAMP

The Acting Governor, Sir Hugh Norman-Walker, will visit a summer camp for underprivileged children organised by the St. John Ambulance Brigade (Cadets) at Hoi Bun School, Lei Yue Mun, on Wednesday (August 23).

The camp began today and will continue until Saturday. Ambulance cadets and Nursing cadets of the Brigade have assumed responsibility for the details.

About 200 children are involved, and the programme includes group games, sports activities, arts and crafts, road safety demonstrations, and informal instructions on public health and fire prevention.

There are 500 cadet members in the Brigade, aged between 13 and 18. Of the number, about 40, under the chairmanship of Ambulance Cadet Wong Tat-chuen, have been actively engaged on work in connection with the camp in the Hoi Bun School.

Sir Hugh, accompanied by Colonel H.A. de Barros Betelho, Commissioner of the Brigade, will arrive by launch at Hang Kee, Lei Yue Mun, and will be met by a reception committee.

On arrival at the school, the Acting Governor and his party will be welcomed by a guard of honour. Sir Hugh will then visit two classrooms, where he will see an arts and crafts session and a demonstration on road safety, public health and fire prevention.

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The visit will conclude with a tour of the playground where groups of children will be engaged in a tug of war, a three-legged race, and a circle game.

Note to Editors:

You are invited to have this visit covered.

Transport will be provided. A government van will leave the sub-pool behind the Tsim Sha Tsui post office at 9.30 a.m. on August 23 for Lei Yue Mun. The Acting Governor will arrive at 11 a.m. A Social Welfare Department official will be on hand to assist the Press.

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BUILDING ACCIDENTS

Three-hundred-and-thirty workers were injured and seven killed while working on building construction sites during July, according to reports received by the Labour Department.

Of this number, 55 were injured and five killed as a result of accidental falls.

The department's Industrial Safety Training Officer said today: "The number of workers killed and injured due to falls involving workers continues to be a source of concern. This type of accident is usually the result of a combination of an unsafe physical condition and an unsafe act by the individual."

He added that the adoption of a few relatively simple and inexpensive precautions could lead to a reduction in these accidents.

"Many of the injuries sustained by workers falling or tripping on the level could be avoided if higher standards of housekeeping were adopted. For example, raw materials should be stacked properly and safely; rubbish and trade waste should be removed regularly from construction sites. Poor housekeeping is probably the biggest contributory factor in accidents involving 'falls of person'."

The officer emphasised that working platforms consisting of a simple plank supported by empty oil drums or trestles made up of odd pieces of timber should not be used. Openings in floors in partially completed buildings should be either fenced or planked over. Staircases should be fitted with temporary handrails and where necessary, adequately illuminated by artificial lighting.

He stressed the need for co-operation between management, supervisors and workers to work together in organising safety programmes to reduce the number of accidents which occur.

Release time: 6.45 p.m.

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