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Impact of Environment on Child Health**Presentation Abstract**

Early life experience is built into our body and significant adversities in a child's growing environment become the roots of impairments in health, learning and behavior. Long term scientific studies showed that the yield of capital investment in human life drops exponentially as age increases while early childhood is the most rewarding period worth investing. Hence it is most logical to invest more resources into early human life to promote child health and development.

In the first ever Child Health Survey conducted in 2006 on more than 7000 children aged less than 14, we found the key role of parenting and family influence on child development. Almost 30% of children living in poverty and suffering from inequality in health, development and early education opportunity. Hong Kong children of low income families are less likely to receive preschool education but more likely to have poor physical and mental health problems, while their parents tend to have fair parenting coping skills. In another population study commissioned by Central Policy Unit, we found alarmingly increase in child maltreatment cases in Hong Kong and seasonal clustering of abuse as a result of parental stress facing school examinations. All these findings suggested the importance of environmental influence including parenting on children's development and wellbeing.

More recent studies using Chinese Early Development Instrument found significant gradient relationship between school readiness of preschool children and the family socioeconomic backgrounds of Hong Kong children. A significant proportion of the gradients could be accounted by mediators from both family processes involving parenting (e.g. parent-child interactive activities, use of digital devices) and kindergarten resources (e.g. teacher education level, education relevance and working experience). Optimal sleep and proper use of digital devices were also found to be important predictors of children's development and behavior.

Given the importance of these scientific findings, policy-makers and stakeholders should pay more attention to evidence-based practice in parenting and promoting early childhood development. Key facilitators and barriers need to be identified in order to design effective intervention programs at both population and individual level. There is an urgent need of integrating the existing education, health and child care services in order to provide an optimal platform and a more stimulating environment for our children to develop. Building a solid foundation for children in the early years provides the best chance for children to have optimal health and educational success, and impacts on children right and development throughout the course of their lives.