Suicide, The Major Cause of Teenage Death
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The major cause of death of teenagers in Hong Kong is suicide. According to the latest statistics published by the Hong Kong Jockey Club Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention (CSRP), despite the fact that the overall suicide rate in Hong Kong has decreased remarkably in recent years, the suicide rate among teenagers aged 15-24 has been escalating since 1999 (Fig. 1). Undoubtedly, there is an urgent need for all of us to confront this social problem. In this article, the causes of teenage suicide will be outlined and a number of measures for different sectors in the society to tackle the problem will be suggested.

Causes
Before making efforts to tackle the problem of teenage suicide, it is essential for us to know about the causes. The causes can be grouped as internal or external causes. Internal causes include changes in hormone levels in adolescence through which teenagers can easily suffer from emotional problems such as depression and anxiety. Moreover, other physical changes like deepening of the voice and getting acne may cause teenagers to have lower self-esteem. External factors include poor relationships with family members, interpersonal problems with peers and academic failures. If teenagers do not have enough strength and capabilities to deal with these causes and do not receive help or support from others, they may attempt to do away with themselves.

Measures to Ease the Problem of Teenage Suicide
The Role of Family Members
The onus of teenage suicide has long been put on parents. Parents are always to blame for not showing enough care and love to their children. Undoubtedly, parents should learn to hear and empathize with the difficulties their children are experiencing and think from the view of teenagers. Moreover, parents should not feel shy to express their love to their children through body languages like hugging and verbal messages like saying ‘I love you!’ face to face. In fact, parents are not the only people to bear the responsibility, but everyone in the family. All members in the family should help to create a harmonious household.
One of the ways to create an intimate family is to have regular family days. We can arrange various activities to do on those days, for instance, cycling and barbecuing in country parks, playing ball games at sport fields and watching films and discussing the plots together afterward. These activities do not just bring family members together and provide a channel for communication, but they also make us more likely to be aware each other’s needs and identify appropriate ways to help each other. It is vital for us to provide adequate support and encouragement to our family members during difficult times.

**Developing a Supportive School Environment**
Most teenagers spend half of their time with classmates and teachers in schools, therefore all people associated with schools inevitably play a major role in tackling the teenage suicide issue. Teachers have long been called on to place less academic pressure on teenagers such as not ranking students using marks only and improving their problem solving techniques to recognize students’ signs of emotional difficulties and suicidal risks. Apart from the effort of teachers, a caring environment should be built in school. For examples, school can post encouraging slogans around the campus and hold sharing sessions about issues puzzling students. In addition, teenagers always find it easier to express themselves and discuss their problems among peers. Therefore, another effective way to create a supportive school environment is through the practice of student-to-student counselling. School can select appropriate students and provide relevant trainings to them, so that these students can assist in identifying schoolmates who are suffering from depression or other problems, and direct serious cases to teachers for further actions. These students act as a bridge between their fellow schoolmates and the school to achieve a caring environment in school.

**Organizing Anti-suicide Campaigns**
In order to raise public awareness on the issue, the Social Welfare Department of the government can organize anti-suicide campaigns on a regular basis. Fun fairs with game booths which introduce causes and precaution measures to teenage suicide can be held in different districts, so that everyone has the opportunity to learn how to handle the problem when it happens. Moreover, anti-suicide video or computer game competitions can also be organized to invite teenagers to take part in. These can deliver positive messages to teenagers to handle difficulties optimistically and lower the risk of suicide.

**All of Us Can Help**
The soaring rate of teenage suicide as well as its adverse impacts can no longer be neglected. It is clear that everyone bears the responsibility for the problem. All of us can help to ease the problem through different means by giving more care and support to the teenagers around us, so that they will no longer feel as abandoned or hopeless as to end their own lives.
References


