



Thai FETP Unveils New Fellowship, Advisor, and Connections to IEIP

The Thailand Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP) began a new six-month fellowship program aimed at increasing the capacity of health professionals who have already graduated from a two-year FETP program.

The initial FETP Junior Fellows, Dr. Angela Huang of Taiwan and Dr. Valerie Daw Tin Shwe of Burma, will hone advanced skills in outbreak and surveillance field epidemiology, as well as curriculum development and management skills.

This year marks other changes and new connections for FETP. Dr. Alden Henderson takes over the job of CDC resident advisor to the program, while IEIP epidemiologists Dr. Somsak Thamthitawat and Dr. Kip Baggett will be advisors and mentor two FETP trainees. FETP will also further its emphasis on zoonotic diseases. The new class of trainees includes three veterinarians.

- Michael O'Reilly

Zoonotic Disease Workshop Merges Human and Animal Health Expertise

Thai and international experts conducted a landmark May workshop in Bangkok to identify gaps in zoonotic disease preparedness at the human – animal interface. Participants from animal and human public health agencies planned how to work together to effectively identify and respond to the threat posed by the estimated 70% of emerging diseases that are of animal origin.

Zoonoses pose major challenges to public health officials in many settings. Although informal links exist, there are relatively few formal communication channels between the various human and animal health sectors involved.

The workshop featured high level participation from the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Public Health, IEIP, WHO, FAO, and CDC's National Center for Zoonotic, Vector-Borne, and Enteric Diseases.

Working groups formulated surveillance and response plans for 3 different threat categories—known zoonoses, emerging infectious diseases, and new potential threats. This forward-thinking merging of human and animal public health expertise will likely serve as a model for detecting and controlling zoonotic threats in Thailand and elsewhere.

- George Watt



Department of Livestock Development Director Dr. Sakchai Sriboonsue headlined the Zoonotic Disease Workshop in May.

SRRT Training Integrates Epidemiology and Management

Provincial responders know well how to technically manage infectious disease outbreaks. Now they're learning new ways to effectively manage people and processes. For about 40 Surveillance and Rapid Response Team (SRRT) members, a new train-the-trainers curriculum began in April. Support for this initiative, aimed at improving SRRT preparedness for outbreaks and other public health emergencies under the new IHRs, comes from IEIP and GDD, Thailand.

Known as Field Epidemiology Management Training (FEMT), the series of 3 workshops combines traditional outbreak investigation technical training with skills such as leadership, team building, and communication. Two-person teams learn to assess existing outbreak detection capabilities in their home provinces, practice writing outbreak investigation reports, and take on various process-focused improvement projects. Two field visits from team advisors are part of the training, which covers 6 weeks spread over a period of 5 months.

Mahidol University served as one of the leads in developing the course, in collaboration with the Thailand Bureau of Epidemiology (BOE) Director, Dr. Kumnuan Ungchusak, and BOE staff. Consultation and guidance were also provided by TUC co-directors Dr. Mike Malison and Dr. Pasakorn Asarasewi. FEMT is expected to continue through 2012, training SRRTs representing all of Thailand's 76 provinces.

- Anupong Sujariyakul

Objective-Based Pandemic Flu Response Plans Formulated

Thailand expects to complete provincial-level operational plans for responding to pandemic influenza before October. Key public health officials received assistance from CDC emergency response experts at a 5-day June workshop featuring objective-based planning. The workshop was funded by IEIP, GDD Thailand, in response to an idea generated by an MOPH-IEIP brainstorming session.

Over 70 officials completed the writing of 200 detailed activities in areas such as command and control, livestock preparedness, isolation and quarantine, risk communication, surveillance and hospital operations, clinical management, and community-based (non-medical) disease prevention.

The pilot plan focuses on Thailand's Phitsanulok province, an area that has experienced natural disasters as well as past outbreaks of avian influenza. Part 2 of the workshop concludes in September. Workshop leaders, from CDC/Atlanta's International Preparedness and Response Team, expect the Phitsanulok model to serve as an operational planning template for other public health emergencies and collaborations under the WHO's recently revised IHRs.

- Myron Wettrich