

IEIP Brief

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An Update on Activities at the International Emerging Infections Program, Thailand

Early in this quarter, not quite one year after the shocking impact of SARS, countries in the region began to report clusters of respiratory illness on chicken farms. In what is now recognized as the most widespread epizootic of highly pathogenic avian influenza ever recorded, more than 100 million birds have died or been culled, human cases and at least 24 deaths have been recognized in Vietnam and Thailand, and IEIP has once again been thrust to the forefront of an emerging infection epidemic of global concern. IEIP scientists have responded admirably, and now-established collaborations have proven critical, as the program provided support to MOPH and WHO field response teams, brought the existing pneumonia surveillance system to bear, and helped to organize an urgently needed regional H5 training course. - *Scott Dowell*

Outbreak Response

In Thailand, Dr. Khanchit participated in daily reviews of the MOPH surveillance activities and case investigations, and he and other IEIP staff were formally appointed to the MOPH technical advisory group. Michael O'Reilly, the resident FETP advisor, worked closely with the Bureau of Epidemiology to implement a case-control study to identify risk factors for disease (picture, right). In addition, Mark Simmerman was detailed to Hanoi where he provided logistical and technical support to both the U.S. ambassador and the WHO-led international investigative team.



BoE investigators conduct the avian influenza case control study in Lopburi, March 2004.



Regional training course on avian influenza at the Thai NIH.

Research

A joint MOPH – IEIP team is investigating the impact of access to health care on the incidence of radiographically confirmed pneumonia in Sa Kaeo. Dr. Siriporn Jatapadma, Sarika Pattanasin, EIS officer Dr. Lauri Hicks, and medical student Nila Dharan spent February working together on the project. Factors being evaluated that might impact the rate of disease include distance to the hospital, cost of transportation, and severity of illness. The expected outcomes are not only the findings relevant to active pneumonia surveillance but also the achievement of collaboration between U.S. and Thai investigators working together as counterparts.

Training

In collaboration with WHO and the Thailand MOPH, IEIP organized a regional training course on human influenza A (H5N1) detection and control. The training was held at the Thai NIH laboratory and conference facilities on February 19-20 (picture, above). The workshop provided practical training on the epidemiology and control of H5N1 as well as specific H5N1 laboratory diagnostic training. The CDC Influenza Branch provided support for this effort by sending Drs. Xu Xiyan and Tim Uyeki. Influenza experts from Hong Kong and WHO also helped facilitate the course. In all, 36 participants from the Ministries of Health of 14 countries attended the training, which was conceived and completed in less than 3 weeks. An additional 27 persons from a variety of countries and public health, military or academic institutions participated as lecturers, laboratory trainers, and observers.

IEIP supported 6 MOPH staff to attend and present papers at the International Conference on Emerging Infectious Diseases in Atlanta, February 29 to March 3. For copies of the abstracts see <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/global/ieip/abstracts.htm>.