

# IEIP Brief

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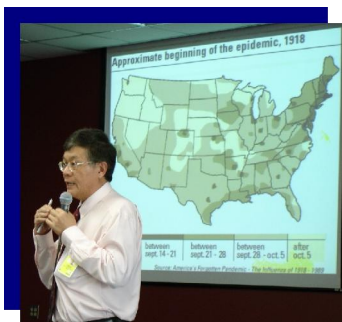
- An Update on Activities at the International Emerging Infections Program
- Thailand Ministry of Public Health – U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Collaboration

With the spread of H5N1 avian influenza beyond Southeast Asia, global preparations for a possible pandemic have become increasingly urgent. IEIP-Thailand continues to serve as a busy hub for planning and preparedness activities. In addition to developing the laboratory and outbreak response training programs highlighted below, IEIP welcomed Melinda Frost and Galen Cole, CDC experts in health communications, to lay the groundwork for an upcoming regional avian and pandemic influenza communications workshop in Bangkok. In December, IEIP said a difficult “goodbye” to its resident influenza expert and assistant director for operations, Mark Simmerman, as he took the opportunity to make great contributions to influenza work at his new position with WHO-Vietnam. We look forward to seeing Mark (pictured at right) frequently, as his contributions to IEIP training activities continue. – *Sonja Olsen*



## Research

A team of interviewers led by EIS Officer Hannah Jordan and Hubert Fellow Shuchi Anand surveyed more than 7700 residents of 40 villages in Nakhon Phanom Province on healthcare utilization in the last year, concluding that 96% of 136 residents with pneumonia sought medical care; 61% of these visited hospitals with active pneumonia surveillance. December marked Nakhon Phanom’s first full year of patient enrollment in the Respiratory Pathogen Study, a consented investigation into causes of pneumonia in hospitalized patients and influenza-like illnesses in outpatients. In 2005, nurses in Nakhon Phanom enrolled 1996 (57%) of 3448 eligible inpatients, as well as a sample of 302 outpatients with influenza-like illnesses and 355 controls with non-respiratory ailments. 53 (17%) of enrolled outpatients tested positive for influenza by rapid test.



Close to home: Dr. Khanchit Limpakarnjanarat, IEIP Adjunct Director, presents an “Avian Influenza Update” to keep Thai staff at the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok up-to-date on avian and pandemic influenza planning measures.

## Outbreak Response

In December, IEIP collaborated with WHO to facilitate development of regional rapid response teams capable of investigating and containing avian influenza outbreaks. Experts from 11 nations met in Bangkok to outline a training curriculum for teams from throughout Southeast Asia. The training material is now being developed. Richard Nolan and Chris Duggar of the CDC’s National Strategic Stockpile group worked with IEIP, USAID, WHO, and other international organizations in Bangkok to plan for a regional stockpile of personal protective equipment and pharmaceuticals to be used in the event of an outbreak of avian influenza.

## Training

In October, scientists from the Thai National Institutes of Health (NIH) and IEIP traveled to CDC-Atlanta for laboratory training in two different viral analysis techniques. Sunthareeya Waicharoen of Thai NIH learned to perform phylogenetic analysis of influenza genes, while Pongpun Sawatwong gained experience in RT PCR assays used to identify viral pathogens. Both will play a key role in transferring these technologies to Thailand. In November, IEIP Laboratory Chief Leonard Peruski also traveled to CDC-Atlanta to review laboratory training programs for avian influenza detection with influenza senior staff. This information will be used to develop a training program to be offered to laboratory staff from Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia and Vietnam in 2006.

## Surveillance

In the first two full months of enhanced microbial surveillance in Nakhon Phanom province, IEIP and Thai MOPH microbiology laboratory staff isolated *S. pneumoniae* in blood cultures from 10 patients, including 4 children. This capability, developed with support from the PneumoADIP at Johns Hopkins University, will provide data on the incidence of invasive pneumococcal disease in rural Thailand, a critical step in evaluating the local need for routine vaccination against pneumococcus. In August, IEIP celebrated the third full year of active hospital-based surveillance for pneumonia in Sa Kaeo Province, and the second in Nakhon Phanom.

