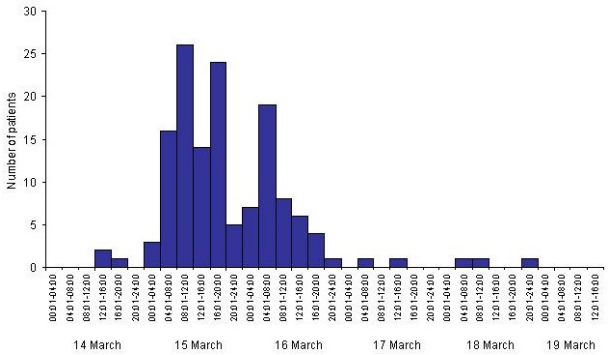
IEIP Brief

1st Quarter, 2006

Editors: Julie Fischer
Sucharat Khunchairak

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

This quarter we highlight the spectacular ability of the Thailand MOPH to detect and respond quickly to outbreaks. In addition to the FETP, the MOPH has trained over 1,000 Surveillance and Rapid Response Teams (SRRT) in all 76 provinces. There are also about 800,000 health volunteers who can assist in quickly reaching villagers. These teams and volunteers are critical to Thailand's ability to rapidly respond to outbreaks, including a possible influenza pandemic. IEIP and CDC were proud to support these teams in a recent botulism outbreak. – *Sonja Olsen*



Epidemic curve of botulism cases in Nan Province.

Research

This year there were 7 abstracts from IEIP projects presented at the International Conference on Emerging Infectious Diseases in Atlanta. Ms. Ladarat Phatinawin, Ms. Leelaowadee Sangsuk, Ms. Pranee Thawatsupha, and Dr. Somrak Chantra from Thai MOPH, Dr. Somsak Thamthitiwat from IEIP, and Dr. Michael Kosoy and Dr. Alicia Fry from CDC-Atlanta presented data on topics ranging from antimicrobial resistance to avian influenza diagnosis, including a report on the isolation of the novel pathogen human bocavirus from Thai pneumonia patients. Following the conference, the CDC Influenza Division hosted international collaborators, including the Thais, for a day of talks and discussion on CDC influenza activities.

Surveillance

Four staff from IEIP and the Thai MOPH participated in a PneumoADIP meeting in Sri Lanka this January. The purpose was to compare experiences and results with researchers from sites throughout Asia and Africa conducting microbial surveillance for *Streptococcus pneumoniae*. In the first 10 months of enhanced laboratory capacity, blood cultures performed in Sa Kaeo and Nakhon Phanom provinces yielded 26 invasive pneumococcus isolates, an increase of more than 6-fold from the three previous years combined.

Outbreak Response

One of the largest recorded outbreaks of botulism recently occurred in Northern Thailand (figure, left). On March 15, residents of Nan Province who had shared a common meal began to report symptoms of foodborne illness to healthcare providers. An immediate investigation launched by the Thai Bureau of Epidemiology, including personnel from the Thai Field Epidemiology Training Program and the district Surveillance and Rapid Response Team, identified at least 163 cases of botulism associated with home-canned bamboo shoots. The quick assessment and communication with international partners led to rapid mobilization of botulism antitoxin through CDC and others. CDC's epidemiologist Dr. Chris Braden carried 50 vials of antitoxin to Thailand, and two laboratory scientists, Dr. Joanna Andreadis and John Kools, assisted the Thai NIH in confirmatory testing of specimens. Although 42 of the 141 hospitalized patients required mechanical ventilation, not a single death occurred.

Training

WHO and the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) joined CDC and IEIP in hosting a Regional Risk and Emergency Communication Workshop for Avian Influenza and Pandemic Preparedness on February 14-16. Participants from Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam presented their national avian influenza communications plans and reviewed strategies for conveying information to the public during a health emergency (picture below). Decision makers from agriculture, education, information, and other government agencies joined their counterparts from ministries of health to share best practices, refine their national risk communication plans, and strengthen regional ties. Melinda Frost and Betsy Mitchell of CDC's Division of Health Communications and Marketing Strategy led a team of facilitators from the host organizations, the Thai Ministries of Public Health and Agriculture, and various non-governmental and academic institutions in developing a working matrix for risk communication planning, and in laying the groundwork for an ongoing health communications consortium.

Participants discuss strategies at a regional avian influenza risk communications planning workshop.