

INCLEN-SEA's EQUAL project moves into second phase

The EQUAL Team (Evidence for Quality in Asia and Australia, the flagship project of INCLEN-SEA) successfully completed Phase 1 of the project. This first phase critically appraised existing clinical practice guidelines (CPGs) and other related materials on the prevention, detection, and management of tuberculosis in Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines, and Australia. Currently, the team members are writing papers for publication, including a paper on the reliability of the Shaneyfelt and AGREE Instruments in evaluating CPGs. The EQUAL team also finished writing the Phase 2 proposal, which aims to determine effective methods of dissemination and implementation of CPGs on tuberculosis. This proposal includes country proposals from Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, and the Philippines. The team submitted the proposal to local and international funding agencies including the INCLEN Trust.

In another development, the CERTCs in Thailand (the Thai Consortium) and the Philippines (the University of the Philippines) evaluated their graduate programs in clinical epidemiology. With support from INCLEN Trust, the CERTCs examined the objectives of their programs, studied individual courses, and reviewed program administration. The CERTCs are now working on curriculum and administrative improvements of the program towards a more relevant graduate program in clinical epidemiology in the region. The CERTCs also submitted a proposal on Distance Learning in Public Health and Clinical Epidemiology to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations - European Union (ASEAN-EU) University Network Program in collaboration with the University of Manchester, United Kingdom and the University of Hamburg, Germany.

With the onset of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemic in the region, members of the network participated in the surveillance and infection control activities on SARS. Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines were active participants in the efforts to assist health care providers in identifying and managing patients suspected and/or infected with SARS. In the Philippines, Drs. Marissa Alejandria and Regina Berba, together with other clinicians, epidemiologists, infectious diseases and pulmonary medicine specialists, participated in the formulation of the SARS Clinical Guidelines for Health Facilities in the Philippines.

The INCLEN-SEA IX Regional Meeting originally set in June 2003 was rescheduled to November 6 to 8, 2003 in Manila, Philippines because of the SARS epidemic in the region. The Board of Coordinators and the Organizing Committee decided to retain its original theme - Research@thespeedofpolicymaking. Details and other developments can be viewed at www.inclensea.org.

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