

INCLLEN-SEA links evidence and quality

Translation of evidence to high-quality care encounters unique difficulties in the healthcare systems of developing countries. Acculturation to evidence-based medicine, constraints in health care resources and information systems as well as institutional and government bureaucracies are sufficiently different from those of the West to merit asking whether evidence-based policy instruments can improve the quality of health care in Asia. Thus INCLLEN-SEA conceptualized in 2001 the *Evidence for Quality in Asia and Australia* (EQUAL), a collaborative health systems research project across its member countries. The overall goal is to determine the ways by which evidence is used to develop healthcare guidelines and policies and whether these evidence-based guidelines and policies do improve the processes and outcomes of care. Phase 1 of EQUAL was a survey of existing evidence-based tools and assessment of the methodological quality of TB Clinical Practice Guidelines (CPGs) in Australia, Malaysia, Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Thailand. Phase 2 aims to describe how these evidence-based guidelines and policies are being disseminated, implemented and monitored. It also aims to look at the effectiveness of these evidence-based tools in improving the quality of care and management of tuberculosis. The project focused on tuberculosis because it ranked among the leading causes of morbidity and mortality among the member countries. The TB CPGs in the six participating countries were identified and assessed for methodological quality. Content analysis showed that the guidelines appropriately endorsed the DOTS strategy in the management of TB, especially in the high-burden countries of Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam and Thailand. In general, these guidelines provide clear directions on the clinical management of tuberculosis. Effectiveness of dissemination strategies and methods of implementation are currently being evaluated by the Clinical Research Centre in Kuala Lumpur as part of Phase 2. Barriers and facilitators to dissemination and implementation are also being explored.

*Marissa Alejandria
EQUAL Coordinator, Philippines*